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# THE CRITICAL WORKS OF THOMAS RYMER

*Edited with an Introduction and Notes by*

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## PREFACE

THOMAS RYMER, in Dryden's opinion, wrote the best piece of criticism in English or perhaps in any of the modern languages; Pope spoke of him as one of the best critics we ever had. Later Macaulay mentioned him as the worst critic that ever lived, while kinder writers called him a literary Don Quixote tilting at wind-mills. He is now known mainly for a critique of Shakespeare that is patently wrong-headed, yet T. S. Eliot has pointed out that he has never seen a satisfactory answer to it. The inaccessibility of Rymer's works has made him a legend. Only in the last few years has sympathetic attention again been directed to the literary and critical tradition he represents. We are now aware that in his own time he was a critic second only to Dryden, the champion of neo-classical rationalistic criticism, the first to study a Shakespeare play systematically, and one of the first to attempt the writing of English literary history. His specific judgments will not always command assent—indeed, they were deliberately put in such a way as to provoke dissent. The significance of Rymer may lie more in the questions he raised than in the answers he gave; at the very least, he offers a challenge that cannot be ignored.

Among historians his reputation has suffered fewer vicissitudes, though very few who use the great collection of documents called Rymer's *Foedera* know of his reputation as a critic. Conversely, students of literature do not always know that Rymer was also an eminent antiquarian to whom criticism was but a second interest. Furthermore, two 19th-century mistakes have distorted the picture. A fervently royalist tract was fathered on him, so that he has been regarded as one so besotted by his devotion to kingship that he carried his sentiments over into literary theory. Stranger still, he was confused with a character of the same name in an 18th-century novel and so described as a miserable hack writer. Both errors, though they seem minor, have done considerable damage.

The present edition aims to make Rymer's critical works again available—in fact, to make the body of his work available for the first time since the 17th century. Since Rymer's ideas were influ-



ential and since he ranged far from his nominal subject matter, I have had to annotate heavily. The introduction is not meant to be exhaustive: full discussions of neoclassical theory are available elsewhere, and about the value of Rymer's interpretations readers will prefer to judge for themselves.

Much of the material in this edition was prepared almost twenty years ago as a Princeton University doctoral dissertation. The long delay in financing publication has, however, benefited the work; in particular the many important publications in neoclassical criticism during this period have enabled me to shorten the apparatus very considerably and have removed all need to justify the reprinting of these texts.

Portions of Rymer's critical works were edited by the late Professor J. E. Spingarn for his *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*. My indebtedness to this work is too general to allow specific credit at each point; without it my task would have been far harder and less adequately performed. The personal obligations I have incurred are many, and even to list the libraries whose staffs have helped me would be ostentation as much as gratitude. Colleagues and friends have supplied many stray facts and led me into the remote areas in which an editor must follow his author. I must content myself with general thanks. The late Professor Hoyt Hudson first guided this work; my onetime colleagues Professors René Wellek and Austin Warren helped and encouraged when publication seemed hopelessly remote; Professors Baldwin Maxwell of Iowa and F. W. Hilles of Yale have helped greatly in the final steps toward publication. To all these, no expression of thanks can be adequate. Finally, I am indebted to the State University of Iowa for the grant that alone makes this edition possible.

C.A.Z.

August 1956



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# INTRODUCTION

## I

THE PLACE AND DATE of Thomas Rymer's birth, while not beyond conjecture, are not certainly known.<sup>1</sup> He was sixteen when admitted to Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, on April 29, 1659, so 1643 is the probable year of his birth.<sup>2</sup> The admission statement there identifies him as the son of Ralph Rymer of Brafferton, Yorkshire, and tells us that he had studied for eight years under Thomas Smelt at Northallerton. Since the Rymers did not come into possession of Brafferton until 1656, the most probable place of Thomas' birth is Yafforth, just outside Northallerton, where his father had previously held lands.<sup>3</sup>

The name Rymer is too common in the North Riding of Yorkshire to allow tracing ramifications of the family, and our Thomas has sometimes been confused with others, particularly with a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, and with another who became Fellow of Queen's College, Cambridge, in 1702. The central facts are clear:

1. The life of Rymer has been written by Sir Thomas Duffus Hardy in the first volume of his *Syllabus (in English) of the Documents . . . Contained in the Collection Known as "Rymer's Fœdera"* (London, 1869). From this source are drawn Sir Sidney Lee's article in the *DNB* and H. R. Tedder's in the ninth and subsequent editions of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. The sketch here offered also rests largely on Hardy, who however was interested in Rymer as historian and admitted a number of troublesome errors into his account of Rymer's literary career. The supposed life in B.M. MS. Lansdowne 987 contains, under the year 1715, merely a brief notice taken from Hickes, *Memoirs of the Life of John Kettlewell*. B.M. MS. Additional 4223, foll. 161 ff., in French and in the handwriting of Des Maizeaux, is little more than a rough draft of a bibliography of Rymer's works; the list stops with vol. 16 of the *Fœdera*, the last Rymer had anything to do with, and may be complete; the MS. number is usually cited incorrectly as 4423.

2. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, pt. 1, 3, 503. Hardy dates the entry 1658 and interprets *annos agens septemdecim* as age seventeen, arriving at a birth-date of 1641, which has been accepted by subsequent reference works. J. W. A. Thorneley, librarian of Sidney Sussex College, has kindly checked the records and confirmed the 1659 date. Dr. J. A. Venn has in a letter pointed out that the Latin phrase occurs only at Sidney Sussex for a brief period and in his opinion should be translated as "rising seventeen."

3. Hardy, p. xvi. In a note Thoresby gives Hinderside or Yafforth as Rymer's birthplace, while in the diary proper he definitely gives it as Yafforth Hall (*Diary of Ralph Thoresby*, ed. Hunter, London, 1830, 1, 296; 2, 24).

Thomas Rymer was the son of Ralph Rymer, who had been baptized at Northallerton September 9, 1601, the son of John. Thomas had an elder brother Ralph and a sister Mary who married John Hopton; he was probably the youngest of at least four children.<sup>4</sup>

The elder Ralph Rymer had substantial holdings in the immediate vicinity of Northallerton, including estates at Yafforth and Wickmore held at an annual rental of £200. In the Civil War and events leading up to it Northallerton, on a main route to the north, was an important point. Strafford and later Fairfax used the town as headquarters; Cromwell passed through; King Charles is said to have slept there twice. Ralph Rymer associated himself—how soon we do not know—with the parliamentary side. In 1645 he was concerned with the provisioning of Fairfax' troops, and from 1650 on his name regularly occurs in connection with Yorkshire financial matters.<sup>5</sup> He became a justice of the peace, member of the committee on sequestrations, and eventually treasurer for the county. Along with these activities, perhaps through them, he improved his own financial standing. The rented properties at Yafforth and Wickmore had belonged to Sir Edward Osborne, a royalist; after sequestration they passed to Ralph Rymer. The manor of Brafferton—about midway between York and Northallerton—he purchased in 1656 together with the adjoining manor of Helperby.<sup>6</sup>

4. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*. A Richard Rymer who in 1564 was purchasing lands near Northallerton may be an earlier ancestor (*Yorks. Arch. Soc. Rec. Ser.*, 2, 301). For Mary, see Ralph Thoresby, *Ducatus Leodiensis*, ed. T. D. Whitaker (Leeds, 1816), p. 188; John Hopton may have been the son-in-law of Ralph Rymer whose presence at one point "hindered farther discussion" of plans for the 1663 uprising (B.M. MS. Additional 33770, fol. 35). The Frances, Daughter of Mr. Ralph Rymer who was buried in York October 12, 1671 (*Yorks. Par. Reg. Soc.*, 11, 57), may have been either Thomas' sister or his niece. A note of Thoresby helps a little: "Though he [Ralph Rymer] was cut short, his children lived long. Thomas, who was made Historiographer Royal, by King William, is seventy-two years of age, yet is the youngest of four now living, in health and perfect memory, whose ages amount to 316: as I noted from his brother's son, the 18th July, 1710" (*Diary*, 1, 297). Since Ralph and Thomas were joined in the Brafferton sale of 1668 the other two were probably daughters. Thoresby is wrong about Thomas' age.

5. *Cal. S. P. Dom.*, 1644–45, p. 537. Passing mention of Ralph Rymer in these papers is common until 1660. There are copies of some of his letters to Fairfax in 1648 in B.M. MS. Additional 36996, foll. 47, 107, 113, and 121, which I have not consulted.

6. Hardy, pp. xv, cxiii; *Cal. S. P. Dom.*, 1663–64, p. 117; *Vict. Hist. N. Riding*, 2, 100.

Meanwhile Thomas was receiving an education scarcely suited to the son of a prominent Roundhead. He had been placed about 1649 in the Northallerton Free School under Thomas Smelt, whose eminent pupils also included George Hickes; John Kettlewell; William Palliser, Archbishop of Cashel; and Thomas Burnet, Master of the Charterhouse and author of *The Sacred Theory of the Earth*. From Rymer's classmate Hickes we learn that Smelt was a reformed alcoholic, a remarkable teacher although not himself a university man, and—more important—an ardent royalist. Hickes reported of his teachings that, “When we came to read *Homer*, he would take Occasion from the many Passages in that Poet, which the learned know are written for the Honour of Kings, to read us Lectures against Rebels and Regicides, whom he compared to the Gyants that fought against the God's, and I do here offer all humble Thanks to God, that by his Means I first received that Light, which made me first discern the Iniquity of the Times, in which I was born, and hitherto bred.”<sup>7</sup> Hickes also noted that Rymer was a particular favorite of his master. Smelt in all probability taught Rymer to look for royal decorum in literature; whether he really influenced Rymer's political views is a question that will detain us later. Certainly Smelt's record in turning out historical scholars was extraordinary, and he may well have turned Rymer's interests in that direction.

From the Northallerton School Rymer went to Sidney Sussex College in 1659, and was still there in 1662 when he contributed some lines of Latin verse to a university collection celebrating the marriage of Charles II and Catherine of Braganza. There is no record of his having taken a degree. It is possible that family troubles intervened.

Ralph Rymer, as might have been expected, suffered financially after the Restoration. The lands at Yafforth and Wickmore, which he had first rented from Sir Edward Osborne and then possessed, were apparently lost, and the Osbornes eventually recovered a sum of £346 which Rymer had forfeited.<sup>8</sup> Sir Edward Osborne was long dead, and the prosecution of the claim fell to his son Sir Thomas, who had become lord high sheriff for Yorkshire and deputy

7. *Memoirs of the Life of Mr. John Kettlewell* (London, 1718), p. 14.

8. Hardy, pp. xv, cxiii; *Cal. S. P. Dom.*, 1663–64, p. 117; Andrew Browning, *Thomas Osborne* (London, 1951), 1, 26.



lieutenant of the county. Later, as Earl of Danby, he was to play a major role in Charles II's government; he survived two impeachments and eventually died as Duke of Leeds. That he felt resentment against Ralph Rymer is natural; that he should later, after Ralph Rymer's execution, attempt to gain the other Rymer property of Brafferton is understandable. Whether this powerful enemy of the Rymers in any other way affected Thomas' career is not certain.

The manor of Helperby, which had been church land, reverted to the church at the Restoration.<sup>9</sup> Brafferton, which Ralph Rymer had acquired about the same time, remained, presumably together with other Yorkshire properties. Financial reverses may have played a part in influencing Rymer and his older son to join in an ill-considered uprising against the restored monarchy. Discontent had been widespread in northern England and reached the level of conspiracy in Durham in 1662, spreading soon to Yorkshire. Spies and informers kept the government abreast of events so that each threatened action was prevented; leaders of the plots were either arrested or driven into exile before their plans could gather momentum. Plans for risings on March 25 and August 6, 1663, were thus frustrated, and hope waned that other sections of England would rise up concurrently. Nevertheless a new plan was made for an uprising on October 12. On that night a desperate group assembled under arms at Farnley Wood near Leeds. There was no battle and no uprising, and gradually the group dispersed in disappointment. The next day some ninety were arrested, including the Ralph Rymers, father and son.<sup>10</sup>

Neither had been present at the Farnley Wood fiasco, but their implication in the plot was beyond doubt and the elder Rymer was almost certainly one of the leaders. His own son was among those who confessed and betrayed him. Ralph Rymer himself denied all

9. *Vict. Hist. N. Riding*, 2, 100.

10. T. D. Whitaker, *Loidis and Elmete* (Leeds, 1816), pp. 106–13; H. Gee, "The Derwentdale Plot," *Royal Hist. Soc. Trans.*, ser. 3, 11 (1917), 125–42; J. Walker, "The Yorkshire Plot, 1663," *Yorks. Arch. Journal*, 31 (1934), 348–59. The examinations and confessions of the persons concerned in the Farnley Wood incident were collected by Ralph Thoresby and passed on to Roger Gale and now form part of B.M. MS. Additional 33770. It contains two examinations of the elder Rymer, and young Ralph Rymer's examination and confession. My thanks are due to William Woods for examining the manuscript for me.

knowledge of the plot and in his testimony implicated nobody. Nevertheless, on January 7, 1664, he and twenty other were sentenced to be hanged, drawn, and quartered.<sup>11</sup> The heads of those executed were set up at York, Doncaster, and Northallerton. Clarendon reported on the action:

Amongst those who were executed, the man who was most looked upon was one Rymer, of the quality of the better sort of grand-jurymen, and held a wise man, and was known to be trusted by the greatest men who had been in rebellion; and he was discovered by a person of intimate trust with him, who had hithertofores the same affections with him, but would venture no more. He was a sullen man, and used few words to excuse himself, and none to hurt any body else; though he was thought to know much, and that having a good estate he would never have embarked in a design that had no probability of success.<sup>12</sup>

The younger Ralph Rymer was sentenced to life imprisonment, and his property was declared forfeit. In 1666 he petitioned the king for release on grounds of health. The petition was favorably endorsed by his custodians, who stated that "Mr. Ralph Rymer, now a prisoner in the castle of York, as we are informed by persons worthy of credit, is weak in body, being both hydropical and consumptive: And that we cannot apprehend him a man able to continue long in that air and durance." He was released on bond on July 16, 1666.<sup>13</sup> Although rumor almost immediately connected him with another plot, he appears to have been left free and to have lived to old age.<sup>14</sup>

Thomas Rymer was not implicated in these plots and probably was not in Yorkshire at the time of the rising. Nor, to our knowledge, were these events ever alluded to in attacks on him. Detail—especially personal detail—is so lacking in our knowledge of Rymer's life that we can only conjecture how these events affected

11. *Depositions from the Castle of York*, Surtees Society, 40 (1861), p. xix; Hardy, p. xvi.

12. *A Life of Edward Earl of Clarendon* (Oxford, 1857), 2, 42.

13. Hardy, pp. cxiv–cxv.

14. *Depositions from the Castle of York*, p. 146; note 4 above.

him. His financial status probably suffered. We know of a mortgage of land in Kirkby Wiske that Ralph Rymer made over to Thomas before his conviction; the amount is not known, nor is it certain that the transaction went unchallenged.<sup>15</sup> The Brafferton manor was forfeited to the Crown, and title was given to Sir Jordan Crossland for £2000 but with a lease to Sir Thomas Osborne at a merely nominal rent. But the Rymers seem to have regained some claim to Brafferton before 1668, when Ralph and Thomas with others sold it to the Bishop of Durham.<sup>16</sup>

We can assume that something was salvaged of the family fortunes and that Thomas had some income. His literary career does not suggest a man writing primarily for money. His work shows, or affects to show, the attitude of a gentleman toward carelessly written trifles. He almost never dedicates: the dedications to *The Tragedies of the Last Age* and *A Short View of Tragedy* are far removed from the usual flattering appeals for reward. Later, when Rymer's remuneration from the government was in arrears and he was advancing from his own pocket the clerical expenses for compiling the *Foedera*, we do hear of financial difficulties, and apparently he left no substantial estate. But there is no basis whatever for the view that Rymer lived miserably in a garret supported only by the uncertain profits from his writing.<sup>17</sup>

Like his father before him, Rymer became a member of Gray's

15. Hardy, p. cxiv.

16. *Vict. Hist. N. Riding*, 2, 100; Browning, 1, 29. Only the first of these mentions the sale by Ralph and Thomas Rymer. The story is far from clear.

17. Francis Coventry's novel, *The History of Pompey the Little* (1751), deals with the adventures of a lap dog Pompey, who at one point is given to an impecunious poet Thomas Rymer and taken to the miserable garret where Mrs. Rymer and two daughters live in squalor. The family is in consternation because Pompey is the only reward Thomas Rymer has brought home, and in the ensuing quarrel his manuscripts—epics, tragedies, and the like—barely escape the fire. Of course Thomas Rymer is the most obvious name one could invent for a Grub Street poet, but only chance and carelessness could attach this scene to the man who had borne the name many years before. Nevertheless this happens in James Caulfield, *Portraits, Memoirs, and Characters of Remarkable Persons* (London, 1819), 1, 50–1, where the whole scene is transcribed as a libel directed against Rymer for his severities toward Shakespeare in his *View of the Tragedies of the Last Age* [sic]. A full-length engraving accompanying the text (taken, probably, from one of the numerous editions of Coventry's novel) passed as an authentic portrait. The error was first noted by T. R. Lounsbury, *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist* (New York, 1901), p. 227, but by that time it had passed



Inn on May 2, 1666, and on June 16, 1673, he was called to the bar.<sup>18</sup> About his work in the law nothing further is known. At Gray's Inn he certainly met a fellow member, Sir Fleetwood Sheppard, to whom *The Tragedies of the Last Age* was addressed. Sheppard, companion of Sedley and Rochester and lifelong friend of Dorset, perhaps introduced Rymer to literary London: to Dorset, and through Dorset to Dryden and to a group of young men who combined a gentleman's interest in poetry with careers in politics—John Somers, George Stepney, and Charles Montagu. Of the older generation he met Hobbes and Waller at least.

It is principally through his publications that we follow Rymer for the next twenty years. His first appearance as a critic was as translator of René Rapin's *Reflexions sur la poétique* in 1674. In translating Rapin Rymer was following a current fashion but also had the good fortune to seize upon a major critical work immediately after its publication. Formal, rationalistic criticism like Rapin's had done much to fashion Restoration literature, and Rymer's translation first made these critical ideas available in England in a systematic way. The translation was anonymous, but authorship seems to have been well known before Rymer claimed it three years later. The preface, with its high praise of Dryden and its championship of English against all other languages and literatures, could not but please. Rymer attacked no accepted dogmas, yet showed himself a writer of some originality and considerable learning, with a clear and forceful, if colloquial style.

This promise was not altogether belied by the next work, *The Tragedies of the Last Age*, published in August 1677. Here Rymer shifted to what must have been for him a far more congenial mode, the attack. But the attack was confined to dead writers; the style, though deliberately more plebeian, was not yet offensive. Dryden wrote to Dorset that the book "has been my best entertainment hetherto," and partly in admiration used the end papers of his copy to draw up the outline of an answer.<sup>19</sup> Wycherley, writing to Mulgrave, was less impressed: "This last Piece is written after the

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into Hardy's biography and into several reference lists. Nothing would be gained by listing its recurrences.

18. Hardy, p. xix.

19. For Dryden's answer, see below, p. xxxiv.

Epistolary Way of Politick Fops, directed to Mr. Shepherd, I suppose from one Room to another at the George and Vulture Tavern, when the Wine was dead, and the Spirits of the Brandy too much wasted by Burning.”<sup>20</sup> Wycherley’s letter shows that Rymer was known to both himself and Mulgrave, and that if they had been spared the reading of his manuscript tragedy of *Edgar* they both knew of its existence (as did Dryden). The reference to the George and Vulture gives us our one glimpse of Rymer against a London tavern background.

The tavern life could only have been occasional. By 1677 Rymer was no longer at Gray’s Inn. He must have been near but not in London, for the dedicatory address to *The Tragedies of the Last Age* speaks of visits to town and adopts the fashionable air of boredom with the country. In 1681 he was farther removed. His essay on parliaments begins, “Sir,—See the effect of your commands. The want of time, of books, and assistance, in this my retirement, make me very incapable of the undertaking.”

To return to the play of *Edgar*. Its composition preceded that of *The Tragedies of the Last Age*, probably by some years. Undoubtedly he had intended it for the stage and had been disappointed. Late in 1677 he published it with a verse dedication to the king in place of the usual prologue. Publication of this “Pattern for exact Tragedies”—to use Wycherley’s scornful phrase—was undoubtedly a mistake, but until the bitter *Short View of Tragedy* invited reprisals Rymer’s enemies left the piece more or less alone.

Rymer in 1681 complained of “the want of time.” Since he was living in the country it is scarcely possible that the law was occupying him, and literary work cannot have consumed all his energies. His most ambitious work during the 1680’s was *A General Draught and Prospect of Government in Europe* which appeared in the spring of 1681. This tract, written at the request of an unnamed person of quality,<sup>21</sup> argues chiefly from medieval chronicles the rights of parliaments against royal prerogative. Its timeliness dur-

20. For the text of both letters, see initial note to *The Tragedies of the Last Age*.

21. Hardy, p. xxii, suggests that this person is John Somers. Somers’ own tract on a similar subject, *A Brief History of the Crown of England*, was published the same year and republished in 1689 and 1714, just as Rymer’s was.

ing the crisis of 1681 is obvious, and in that constitutional issue places Rymer squarely among the Whigs. There were miscellaneous prose works—perhaps the preface to Bulstrode Whitelocke's posthumously published memoirs, perhaps a Latin life of Hobbes, certainly the Latin preface for Hobbes' poem *Historia ecclesiastica* in 1688. In 1684 he contributed the life of Nicias to the Dryden translation of Plutarch. Here Rymer's prose style, controlled by the necessities of translation and freed from its homeliness, shows his writing at its most effective.<sup>22</sup> In 1691 followed another critical work, the preface to the Tonson edition of Rochester's poems.

The verse published during this period is less interesting. For collections edited by Dryden he translated Ovid's "Penelope to Ulysses" in 1680 and his *Amores*, III, 6, in 1684. Both are worse than indifferent, and the deliberately rough verse and colloquial language are badly misplaced. Three poems contributed to a volume in memory of Edmund Waller are slightly better.<sup>23</sup> A verse attack on Dryden, a congratulatory poem on the arrival of King William, and another on the arrival of Queen Mary record his enthusiastic welcome to the Glorious Revolution.

The rhetorical couplets of *Edgar*, the congratulatory poems, and the even cruder couplets of the Ovid translations show not the slightest aptitude for even the mechanics of verse. Here Rymer had mistaken his talents, and contemporaries were not slow to make the obvious pun on his surname. Yet he did possess a knack for at least passable light verse. Only a few of his incidental poems were printed in his lifetime—a song from *Edgar* had appeared in a Playford songbook with a setting by James Hart, and three pieces were printed by Nahum Tate in a miscellany in 1685. These prepare us to some extent for the collection of Rymer's poems published after his death, in general so different from his other work. Most of the verses can be classed as baroque pastorals, short complimentary or amorous poems in which Lucasia, Phyllis, and Olinda move stiffly across a landscape that has lost most touches

22. This translation is still in print in Arthur Hugh Clough's revision of the Dryden *Plutarch*. Clough has revised Rymer's work considerably, perhaps for the sake of uniformity.

23. Rymer is also credited with the long Latin inscription on Waller's tomb at Beaconsfield; see note to p. 127:10.

of reality. Occasionally a line will suggest Rochester or Sedley, but Rymer's style at times betrays him. His pose as a cavalier lover leads to vulgarity, and clumsy colloquialisms shatter the grace of the pastorals. At one point we can break through the disguise and recognize in Dorolissa Lord Dorset's illegitimate daughter Mary.<sup>24</sup> No disguise covers the poems addressed to the family of Thomas Grey, second Earl of Stamford.<sup>25</sup> The poems were apparently written at Bradgate and Groby, the Grey estates in Leicestershire, and celebrate principally the illustrious remote ancestors of the Greys and their connection with the royal family; there was no occasion to mention that the first Earl of Stamford had been a parliamentary commander or that his son had been a regicide and Fifth Monarchy man. The second earl himself was a member of Shaftesbury's party and became involved in the Rye-House conspiracy. This connection with a family of extreme Whigs may throw some light on Rymer's political views.

About the end of 1692 finally appeared *A Short View of Tragedy*, only in part the promised sequel to *The Tragedies of the Last Age*, in which Rymer had promised critiques of *Othello*, *Julius Caesar*, *Catiline*, and *Paradise Lost*. The last was forgotten, and *Julius Caesar* and *Catiline* received but scant attention, while the attack on *Othello*—almost a third of the book—pushed to its extreme Rymer's objection to English drama of the last age. The entire volume, with its disproportion of parts, misnumbered chapters, and numerous printing errors, gives the impression of having been thrown together from materials at hand rather than written to a plan. Chaotic, ill-digested, unnecessarily erudite, this was Rymer's last and most ambitious critical work. His views had become more extreme but had not changed fundamentally during the fifteen years

24. Brice Harris, *Charles Sackville* (Urbana, Ill., 1940), pp. 162–3. One other poem which ought to give biographical information begins,

Your humble slave does still at *Bramshill* stay;  
There languishes, and cannot get away.

Bramshill Manor in Hampshire belonged to the Henley family, the brother and nephews of the wit Anthony Henley, but I have been unable to trace any further connection between them and Rymer.

25. The poems are numbers IX, XX, and XXI. The last of these, "On Mr. Gray of Envil, erecting his Monument, and settling his Estate," must date before the birth of a male heir to that branch of the family in 1684.

separating his two books on tragedy. No favorable reception was accorded to this one, partly because taste was changing, more particularly because the attack on Shakespeare showed too clearly what Rymer's critical principles, ruthlessly applied, would lead to. Also, the attacks on Dryden were in bad taste. *A Short View* was too important a work to ignore, too learned to be without effect. Dryden scarcely responded, but two younger critics, Dennis and Gildon, wrote formal replies. For several years there were jeers at Rymer's attack on Shakespeare, usually coupled with references to his own unfortunate attempt to write a tragedy.

By this time Rymer's interests were elsewhere. Already on the title page of *A Short View* there appeared after his name the phrase, "Servant to their Majesties." On November 19, 1692, had died Thomas Shadwell, Dryden's successor as poet laureate and historiographer royal, and almost immediately Rymer succeeded to the latter of the two dignities, with an annual salary of £200. This had last been held as a separate office by James Howell until 1666; for Dryden and Shadwell it had been combined with the laureateship, apparently as an appointment requiring few special qualifications. We can only conjecture why the offices were again split and why the post of historiographer was offered to Rymer. His prominence was not such as to warrant public reward, nor would his one published historical essay suggest particular abilities. Probably influence counted for at least as much as merit in the appointment.

But the appointment soon ceased to be a sinecure. A project was undertaken to publish for the first time past treaties entered into by the English government; on August 26, 1693, Rymer was appointed editor for this collection and given access to all necessary documents. The plan for the monumental collection now known as Rymer's *Foedera* may have been Rymer's, but more probably it originated from above. Somers and Montagu sponsored the project, and Montagu—better known by his later title of Earl of Halifax—was usually mentioned by contemporaries as its instigator. It is probable that Rymer already knew these men; it is possible that plans for this project had dictated the separation of offices of laureate and historiographer.

Rymer's published work up to this time would hardly show him



as qualified for the task. To be sure, there is antiquarian zeal in his critical work, and his essay on parliaments shows some knowledge of medieval history. His command of languages was perhaps adequate; according to Hickes he was completely ignorant of Anglo-Saxon,<sup>26</sup> but he knew enough German to quote occasionally, he could work out Old French and Provençal, use Greek, and write fluent if ponderous Latin. There is so much ostentation in the way Rymer parades his learning that one suspects it was neither deep nor systematic. Still, our knowledge of his life in the 1670's and 1680's is too slight to allow us to determine his real interests.

Less than a month after he was appointed editor Rymer was already at work at the Chapter House, Westminster, on a task that was to occupy him for the rest of his life. He had been ordered "to transcribe and publish all the leagues, treaties, alliances, capitulations, and confederacies, which have at any time been made between the Crown of England and any other kingdoms, princes, and states"<sup>27</sup>—a directive which he interpreted with considerable freedom. Though the first volume of this collection was eleven years in appearing, the importance of Rymer's work attracted attention from the moment of his appointment. Leibnitz, whose *Codex juris gentium diplomaticus* (1693) was to serve as model for the *Foedera*, wrote to George Stepney for an introduction to Rymer, and a correspondence between the two scholars ensued.<sup>28</sup> Naturally Rymer was also in contact with English scholars. We get glimpses of him in the diary of the Yorkshire antiquary Ralph Thoresby; Pepys borrows a copy of Froissart from him; he is attacked by Scottish historians and enters into matters of Scottish history with Bishop Nicolson.<sup>29</sup>

26. Hickes, *Linguarum Vett. Septentrionalium Thesaurus* (Oxford, 1705), p. xxv.

27. Hardy, p. xxvi.

28. Several letters are printed by Hardy, pp. cxix–cxxi. Some not known to him are in the library at Hannover; see Bodemann, *Der Briefwechsel des Gottfried Leibnitz* (Hannover, 1889), item 793, and M. Klibansky, "Leibnitz's Unknown Correspondence with English Men of Letters," *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies*, I (1941), 133–49. Microfilm copies are deposited in the University of Pennsylvania Library.

29. *The Diary of Ralph Thoresby* (London, 1830), I, 296–7 and 2, 24, 27, 156; R. G. Howarth, *Letters and the Second Diary of Samuel Pepys* (London, 1932), p. 329; Hardy, pp. xxxviii–xli. The Pepys letter shows further that Humfrey Wanley and Rymer were acquainted.

On the other side is the story of the scholar's hardships. Rymer had a salary as historiographer but none as editor until 1702. He was continually in difficulties, first in gaining access to the documents, then in paying to have them transcribed; later he apparently had to advance money toward their publication. At one point he was forced to sell his own library, and in 1711 (probably too ill to write himself) he had a friend write to the Earl of Oxford to offer his manuscript transcripts for sale.<sup>30</sup> In spite of these handicaps, in spite even of a fire at the printer's, once the work was started it progressed rapidly. The first volume of the *Foedera* appeared in November 1704, and in the remaining nine years of his life Rymer published through volume fifteen and had gathered the materials for the next. The work was completed—not too competently—by Robert Sanderson, who had been Rymer's assistant at least since 1707. According to Hearne, Rymer had planned a separate volume of critical observations on his material, but of this nothing more is known.<sup>31</sup>

Rymer died December 13, 1713, at his lodgings in Arundel Street and was buried at St. Clement Danes four days later. His grave is not marked. His will, made on July 10 previous, bequeathed all his property to Mrs. Anne Parnell, spinster, of the same parish. She may have been Rymer's housekeeper; apparently Rymer had no immediate family. Rymer's estate could not have been substantial, and probate of the will on the day of his death suggests urgency in meeting funeral expenses.<sup>32</sup>

This account of his latter years might have been expanded by citing at length the record of his troubles with the *Foedera*, or by

30. The friend was Peter le Neve, Norroy King of Arms, who began his letter, "I am desired by Mr. Rymer, historiographer (who cant doe it himself) to lay before your lordship the circumstances of his affairs" (Hardy, p. lxxvi). Another hint of Rymer's failing health may be found in Swift's coveting his office of historiographer as early as August 1710 (E. K. Broadus, *The Laureateship*, Oxford, 1921, p. 220).

31. *Letters by Eminent Persons* (London, 1813), I, 289. For a general estimate of Rymer's achievement as editor, see Hardy, pp. lxxv, lxxxiii–lxxxvii, and David Douglas, *English Scholars* (2 ed., London, 1951), pp. 227–30; Douglas' account is biased by his belief that Rymer was a journalist in desperate financial straits.

32. Hardy, p. lxxvii. I verified the burial entry from the register at St. Clement Danes before the destruction of that church, but was unable to find the grave.

giving the contemporary tributes to the work as it progressed. They were many, but they tell us little about Rymer as a person or even of the value placed on his abilities. The *Foedera* was a major undertaking and Rymer was honored as its editor; but the tributes were such as would be paid to any competent editor. Only occasionally does one catch a personal note like Dunton's "orthodox and modest Rymer," or Thoresby's "good old Mr. Rymer."<sup>33</sup> Sometimes the personal note comes from Rymer himself. In an early letter to Leibnitz he regrets that "I am kept at hard work in the Royal Archives, hidden from the eyes of men, and where I grub and dig daily among decaying parchments covered with dirt and mildew."<sup>34</sup> A note of self pity creeps—not unjustifiably—into Rymer's various pleas for money to meet expenses. He complains of documents putrifying and hardly legible, of the long work, and of financial sacrifices. Already in 1702 he had written in a petition, "A debt is brought and grows upon me, which of necessity I must sink under (unless relieved by the Treasury), which I may the rather expect in regard that hitherto no manner of consideration hath been had of my almost ten years constant attendance in that service. Let me also remind you that old age comes fast upon me, that I cannot expect to be much longer in condition to do anything."<sup>35</sup>

The evidence, all taken together, suggests a rather lonely man, known to many by name and reputation. If Rymer had close friends they were probably neither historians nor men of letters; at all events they left no memoirs, and for a picture of Rymer we have little to turn to except the published works.

## II

Rymer's critical work deals principally with tragedy, and in this genre his influence made itself particularly felt. He had in his first work declared his confidence in the English language and the English literary genius. Epic poetry was still unsatisfactory, yet (surprisingly) "for the *Drama*, the World has nothing to be compared with us."<sup>1</sup> The basic faith in modern literature and the idea of progress

33. Dunton, *Life and Errors* (London, 1818), 1, 354; Thoresby, 2, 24.

34. Hardy, pp. xxxiii, cxix; the original is in Latin.

35. Hardy, p. xlvi.

1. P. 10.



Rymer never abandoned, but his estimate of actual accomplishments changed, indeed changed so much that even his contemporaries eventually missed the point and regarded him as a blind partisan of the ancients.

The incidental praise of English drama just quoted came from the Rapin preface, 1674, and undoubtedly referred to heroic tragedy; somewhere around this time Rymer was writing *Edgar* in obvious if inept imitation of Dryden. When he came to examine English tragedy three years later his opinions were changing, though unfortunately not rapidly enough to keep him from publishing his play. English drama had taken a wrong turn: "And, certainly, had our Authors began with Tragedy, as *Sophocles* and *Euripides* left it; had they either built on the same foundation, or after their *model*; we might e're this day have seen Poetry in greater perfection, and boasted such *Monuments* of wit as *Greece* or *Rome* never knew in all their *glory*." <sup>2</sup> In *A Short View* this narrows to a rejection of all modern drama and an insistence that we return to Aeschylus and make a fresh start. Nothing could be hoped from such an extreme program, nor can one believe that Rymer seriously expected it.

*Tragedies of the Last Age* was another matter. The criticism of Beaumont and Fletcher presented a challenge to contemporary playwrights. Dryden immediately recognized its importance and to effect an answer stated the problem as "how far we ought to imitate our own poets, Shakespeare and Fletcher, in their tragedies." <sup>3</sup> Dryden's answer in the *Troilus and Cressida* preface grants more of Rymer's case than we would expect, and more than Dryden himself would have granted in later years. Even Dryden did not have the perspective to see as clearly as we can that English tragedy of his time had inherited a tradition quite at variance with the critical standards it was attempting to use. French classical drama had no such important heritage. Corneille could reject Hardy and other predecessors and work, albeit uncomfortably, in conformity to the critical standards then developing. Dryden could not reject Shakespeare and Fletcher, whose plays were still acted regularly and whose dramatic techniques could still furnish guidance. In France

2. P. 21.

3. *Essays*, I, 207.

the greatest drama arose with or after the criticism; in England it preceded. Restoration playwrights in general accepted the premises of the critics (although there might be quarrels about specific application, in England as in France) and combined these with admiration for the drama of the giant age before the flood. Rymer showed that they could not have both.

*Tragedies of the Last Age* is in the form of an epistle, and Rymer almost apologizes for its informality: "You will find me ty'd to no certain *stile*, nor laying my reasons together in *form* and *method*. . . . I am not cut out for writing a *Treatise*, nor have a *genius* to *pen* any thing *exactly*." <sup>4</sup> Perhaps so, but the principal points of the theory are clearly enough put. The phrase on the title page, "examined by the practice of the ancients and by the common sense of all ages," gives the central idea. Both criteria are open to some misrepresentation. "Practice of the ancients" will be considered later; first must come "common sense." Common sense, as some of Rymer's judgments apply it, strikes us as so far from common that we may sympathize with one outraged protest, "Rymer has been regarded as the upholder of common sense, but this surely is nonsense." On the other hand, we are confused when Spingarn places Rymer among the antirationalists and sets up a school of common sense to include Rymer, Buckingham of *The Rehearsal*, and Samuel Butler as critics who appeal from a system to what seems immediately apparent.<sup>5</sup> Common sense—the phrase itself has not changed greatly in meaning through the centuries—can be applied in two rather different ways. It can refer to those lower flights of reason where conclusions are readily apparent, or it can be an appeal back from the results of reasoning to what is readily apparent. In general, the second use is the more common: Swift used common sense against the scientists of Laputa and their neighbors, and Johnson kicked a stone to refute Berkeley. Today common sense ridicules the theories of Freudian psychology; until very recently it was used to attack relativity and atomic physics. For neoclassicism there was justification for this method in what Lovejoy calls rationalistic anti-intellectualism:

4. Pp. 20–1.

5. Spingarn, *Essays*, I, lxiii ff. For a discussion of common sense in early 18th-century criticism see Francis Gallaway, *Reason, Rule and Revolt in English Classicism* (New York, 1940), pp. 49–63.

The presumption of the universal accessibility and verifiability of all that it is really needful for men to know implied that all subtle, elaborate, intricate reasonings about abstruse questions beyond the grasp of the majority are certainly unimportant, and probably untrue. Thus any view difficult to understand, or requiring a long and complex exercise of the intellect for its verification, could be legitimately dismissed without examination. . . . A "system" was a legitimate object of suspicion simply because it *was* a system.<sup>6</sup>

This view will justify an attack on a critic on the grounds that his conclusions are far-fetched or that he is concerned with trivialities, without demanding an attack on his premises. Ridicule is a legitimate weapon, whether used by Rymer against Shakespeare or by Butler against Rymer. Similarly legitimate is the appeal to the *consensus gentium*, the common sense or common sentiment of all ages, since if a conclusion differs widely from what is generally believed it is almost certainly wrong. Again the weapon is one that can be used by Rymer but can easily be turned against him.

In general, however, Rymer's common sense is not an appeal from ratiocination, but a stress on what is easily apparent or is reasonable without requiring strenuous application of reason or learning: "And certainly there is not requir'd much Learning, or that a man must be some *Aristotle*, and *Doctor of Subtilties*, to form a right judgment in this particular; common sense suffices; and rarely have I known the *Women-judges* mistake in these points, when they have the patience to think, and (left to their own heads) they decide with their own sense."<sup>7</sup> This use of common sense may imply a principle that Rymer thinks readily apparent, e.g. that a king in a tragedy can do no wrong. Or, more often, it is a mere appeal to probability—is it likely that a king would marry his mistress to a high-spirited warrior who could resent the injury? is it likely that Arbaces would be kept in ignorance of his true parentage?

By easy steps this use of common sense leads to rules and rules to a system. The system is implied rather than stated, and Rymer

6. A. O. Lovejoy, "The Parallel of Deism and Classicism," *Essays in the History of Ideas* (Baltimore, 1948), p. 85.

7. P. 18.

treats the more common rules lightly; but his common sense is always used in support of the rules, never to attack them. Common sense provides the axioms from which we derive the rules, or we can take a simpler path and follow the ancients who have already derived them that way: "But the Poets were his [Aristotle's] Masters, and what was their practice, he reduced to principles. Nor would the *modern Poets* blindly resign to this practice of the *Ancients*, were not the Reasons convincing and clear as any demonstration in *Mathematicks*. 'Tis only needful that we understand them, for our consent to the truth of them." <sup>8</sup> The rules then are laws discovered, not devised, and their discovery starts with common sense.

Probability is the first requirement of common sense. Probability in French critics and sometimes in Rymer is interpreted as actual deception, or at least as something so like actuality that it can deceive. Rymer does not insist on this narrowest view, and indeed treats its most obvious concomitant, the unities of time and place, lightly. These mechanical parts of tragedy are beauties that we need concern ourselves with only after the essentials are satisfied; when the unities are violated, "Well, the absurdities of this kind break no Bones. They may make Fools of us; but do not hurt our Morals." <sup>9</sup> We are grateful for the relaxed attitude, but realize that the concession is made by sacrificing logic. If we cannot believe in the action of a play there seems no point in demanding probability in other matters; and if we are fools enough to believe that Othello could go from Venice to Cyprus between acts, we might also be foolish enough to believe in a character as untypical as Iago. Any theory of drama which rests on narrow verisimilitude will show some inconsistency of this sort, and few parts of neoclassical theory are as unsatisfactory as its attempts to deal with literary illusion. D'Aubignac who insisted that an audience at a play was completely deceived and Dr. Johnson who insisted that there was no deception at all were both wide of the truth; still, attack or defense of the unities was usually conducted solely on this issue.

Rymer passes by the unities because probability has for him more important aspects. The construction of a play must be reasonable, and probability is the measure of success here. In characters proba-

8. P. 3.

9. P. 142.

bility involves decorum, and decorum leads to morality. Rymer's emphasis that action must be reasonable and probable needs little illustration. Here he makes his closest approach to common-sense criticism like *The Rehearsal*, where any action or speech that transcends the commonplace can be held up to ridicule. The standard will vary: in Rymer's earlier work, written against the background of heroic tragedy, rhetorical flourishes are almost demanded, while later in the *Othello* chapter he time and again feels that merely quoting a speech without analysis will be enough to show its absurdity. So Pope, considering Macbeth's

Nay, this my hand would rather  
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,  
Making the green one red,

threw the passage into a footnote as unworthy of Shakespeare. The premises are about the same, and taste—a concept with which Rymer has little concern—governs their application.

The insistence on reasonableness troubles much neoclassical theory of tragedy, since it demands that tragic action be both exalted and ordinary, that it raise pity, fear, and admiration at the same time that it appeal to our reason. Rymer does occasionally talk about tragic emotion, but always as something produced by the poet's ingenuity. To be sure, he does mention the need for genius (or wit or fancy), almost always in the antithesis of fancy versus judgment. One needs genius and learning, nature and art, wit and judgment; but no matter how the terms are chosen, the emphasis always falls on the second member of the antithesis. And in the one passage where Rymer discusses the role of fancy, not even the antithesis is left; the results of the poet's fancy are always reasonable, and fancy turns out to be merely a way of expediting the creative process and anticipating the conclusions of reason.<sup>10</sup>

Probability in characterization demands decorum. The term here is taken in its narrowest sense as conformity or fitness of character. It is perhaps Rymer's most obvious criterion, and certainly the one that most easily lends itself to ridicule. Specific applications of the idea are carried to extremes, but the whole concept requires examination before we too hastily condemn it as mere fantastic

etiquette. There are certain characteristics belonging to a nationality, a class, an age group, or a profession; the 17th-century revival of the Theophrastan character is helpful but hardly necessary to illustrate the idea. Horace had, as a practical matter, advised his young poets to be observant of such characteristics. Or, as a present-day writer puts it, "And just as behavior should proceed from character so should speech. A fashionable woman should talk like a fashionable woman, a street walker like a street walker, a soda jerker like a soda jerker and a lawyer like a lawyer."<sup>11</sup>

From Aristotle's statement that poetry is more serious and philosophical than history grows easily—we need not now argue how correctly—the idea of poetry as an imitation of the ideal, of the universal free from its accidents. In this particular idea of conformity to nature three ideas are confused: nature as the Platonic ideal, nature as the generic type excluding individual eccentricities, and nature as the average.<sup>12</sup> These notions of course overlap in practice. A king in poetry must conform to the ideal type, that is, he must be just, noble, and heroic, even though actual kings do not attain this ideal. Any shortcomings here are specific accidents not belonging to the genus 'king.' We expect a king—the average king—to approximate the type. Here probability, decorum, and morality join. If a king in tragedy is not an ideal king he does not conform to the generic or average type and consequently we find the character unconvincing; also, the picture of a king who is not what he should be decreases our respect for rank and government.

Tragedy, reflecting life as it should be, serves as a school of manners. Therefore we can have no immodest women, no insolent courtiers, no low conversation, no outbursts of passions that would shock us. Here Rymer's more absurd rules enter:

though it is not necessary that all *Heroes* should be Kings, yet undoubtedly all crown'd heads by *Poetical right* are *Heroes*.

I question whether in Poetry a King can be an accessory to a crime.

11. Somerset Maugham, "What Makes a Good Novel Great," *New York Times Book Review*, November 30, 1947, p. 1.

12. Lovejoy, " 'Nature' as Aesthetic Norm," *Essays in the History of Ideas*, p. 71. These three correspond to Lovejoy's meanings 3, 4, and 5.



in Poetry no woman is to kill a man, except her quality gives her the advantage above him.<sup>13</sup>

This side of decorum, the emphasis on ideal rather than typical characters, Rymer has taken from the earlier French formalist critics, La Mesnardière and D'Aubignac, and something of the *précieuse* tradition remains. These critics were primarily interested in tragedy as a school for princes, an interest echoed in Rymer's concern with the conduct of kings and the respect due to them. The idea is by no means limited to Rymer, and heroic tragedy will show many examples before Rymer started writing. Behind this lie the ideas of instruction and of imitation of ideal nature just mentioned, yet the emphasis is so marked in Rymer, particularly in *Tragedies of the Last Age* and *Edgar*, that it is usually assumed to rest on Rymer's fanatical devotion to kings. What we know of Rymer's life does little to bear this out, and the idea might not have started had not a royalist tract of 1668 been erroneously ascribed to him.<sup>14</sup> He did have a royalist schoolmaster, but against this we must place the facts that Rymer's father was a Roundhead who was hanged for rebellion, that Rymer in 1681 wrote an essay upholding Parliament against kings, that his political connections were with Whig leaders like Stamford, Somers, and Dorset, that he welcomed the revolution and was given office under King William. This evidence is convincing for the 1680's and falls just short of proof for the earlier decade. The probability is that Rymer, like most Englishmen, accepted the restored monarchy without necessarily believing that Charles II was the ideal king, and that he was loyal without fanaticism. When party lines were drawn again during the crisis over the exclusion bill he sided with the Whigs. It is surely safer to look for the source of his ideas of royal decorum in critical theory and the practice of heroic tragedy rather than in a personal fanaticism for which there is no other evidence.

In *A Short View* there is less stress on the ideal character and more on the typical or average, and consequently more concern with probability than morality in characterization. The Romans in *Julius Caesar* are not representative Romans, nor are the Venetians

13. Pp. 42, 65.

14. Appendix, item A.

in *Othello* representative Venetians, and so the plays are false to history and to probability. But by far the most famous of Rymer's accusations concerns Iago, who is not simple and honest as the typical soldier should be and hence is an improbable and inconsistent character. The charge seems ludicrous, but the cumbersome attempts to answer it suggest that there is an unsolved aesthetic problem and that Rymer, as so often, has pointed out the problem without giving the right answer. One can point out that it is improbable for a soldier to be so coldly calculating a villain, that the very improbability enables Iago to impose on Othello, and that his success depends partly on the idea of the typical soldier that Rymer holds—everyone believes that he has the soldier's qualities of simplicity and forthright honesty. So the very idea of decorum that Rymer upholds is actually in the play, and its violation allows the tragic action.

It is in terms of plot rather than of character that Rymer attacks the morality of *Othello*. And his burlesque statement of possible morals is meant only to prove that the play is amoral, not immoral. But the attempts of later commentators to find a true moral along Rymer's lines, and the quite serious use of this technique to find morals in other plays, again show that Rymer had grasped a problem that other critics have found valid. The moral statement that tragedy makes is not simple, and this much at least Rymer recognized, though his banter here and his insistence on poetic justice have obscured his true belief. He shared with most critics of his time the belief that the plot (the fable or *μῦθος*) should have a moral toward which it was directed. But this moral was not to be an ordinary one. For example, in *Rollo*, "The sense must be this; *He that sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed*. And if this be all, where's the Wonder? Have we not every day cried in the Streets, instances of God's *revenge* against *murder*, more extraordinary, and more poetical than all this comes to? If this be Poetry, *Tyburn* is a better and more ingenious *School of Vertue*, than the *Theatre*." <sup>15</sup> Rymer might not have appreciated *Macbeth*, but at least he would not have made the mistake of regarding it primarily as a warning against regicide.

Justice is, of course, demanded in the ideal world which tragedy



imitates, and Rymer coined the term "poetical justice" to express the idea. This is merely a new term for an old idea and arose naturally from Rymer's contrast between poetry and history. He added one refinement, that this justice had to be so exact that no character could commit more crimes than he could be punished for. The idea of poetical justice was serious enough, though Rymer's initial use of the term was facetious. His real point was that the voluntary criminal was no fit protagonist for tragedy. To reconcile the demands of justice with those of pity was a problem Rymer was at least aware of, and his emphasis on the involuntary crimes and inherited curses of Greek tragedy was one attempt at a solution. His suggestions for redrawing *Rollo* along classical lines show how little he valued a play in which mere justice was done, and that he sensed something of the problem of reconciling Aristotle's statements about the tragic hero with the demands of decorum. He saw that the practice of the ancients offered some guidance on this point, rather more guidance than heroic tragedy with its idealized heroes could, and he deliberately reduced classical plays to colloquial language to make comparison easier.

None of these ideas of drama was original with Rymer, though his application of them was individual and fresh to English criticism. His immediate sources were generally recognized by his contemporaries. The critical ideas were all found in French formalism, in the Aristotelian commentaries which in France had followed the *Cid* controversy and in the more practical discussion of these ideas in the work of Corneille. For Rymer the most important works were Jules de la Mesnardière's *Poétique* (1640), the Abbé d'Aubignac's *La Pratique du théâtre* (1657), and René Rapin's *Reflexions sur la poétique* (1674), which he himself translated. René le Bossu's *Traité du poème épique* (1675) was in the same tradition but of less importance since it did not deal directly with tragedy. A belated formalist work, André Dacier's edition of Aristotle's *Poetics* in 1692, came just in time to influence *A Short View*. The notes in this edition will show how deeply Rymer was indebted to these critics and will also show that one need seldom look further for the source of his ideas. He knew some Italian critics at first hand and had at least the usual contact with classical authorities, but his thinking was so directed by the French school that this knowledge

had little to do with shaping his ideas. And while each of Rymer's theories could be found singly elsewhere, only in French formalism does one find them all grouped together and logically interconnected.<sup>16</sup> And in the critiques and controversies surrounding this literature one can find some of the sources for the methods Rymer used in his attacks and for the colloquial style, so deliberately unsuited to the gravity of the subject matter.<sup>17</sup>

Two points of apparent disagreement between Rymer and his French sources must be noted. Rymer states categorically that the end of poetry is pleasure, while French formalists without exception insist that its end is instruction.<sup>18</sup> In practice this matters little, since for tragedy Rymer immediately adds that it cannot please without profiting, while French critics add that it cannot profit without pleasing. A more important difference is Rymer's stress on common sense. French critics insisted on a previous knowledge of the rules and regarded poetry as an esoteric art, the beauty or even probability of which could be judged only by those properly instructed. La Mesnardière and D'Aubignac are more insistent here than are the later critics. But in practice the difference is slight, since common sense leads to knowledge of the rules and thence to good taste and sound judgment. Rymer demanded less from taste

16. The standard work is René Bray, *La Formation de la doctrine classique* (Paris, 1927). The relationship between Rymer and French criticism was the subject of G. B. Dutton's Harvard dissertation, published in part as "The French Aristotelian Formalists and Thomas Rymer," *PMLA*, 29 (1914), 152-88, and has again (1953) been explored by F. D. Dollard's University of California dissertation, "French Influence on Thomas Rymer's Dramatic Criticism." Since my space would not allow discussion and since the right of publication should remain his, I have not availed myself of Dr. Dollard's offer of access to his materials.

17. There has been little study of Rymer's style save as it was reflected by Jeremy Collier. Collier's style was studied and attacked by John Constable, *Reflections upon Accuracy of Style* (London, 1731), and placed in the Senecan tradition; see George Williamson, *The Senecan Amble* (Chicago, 1951), pp. 365-7, and Helene M. Hooker, "Father John Constable on Jeremy Collier," *PQ*, 23 (1944), 375-8. Williamson (p. 352) includes Rymer among the practitioners of the pert style, a late offshoot of the Senecan. W. K. Wimsatt Jr. argues that the style of Rymer and Collier represents an exaggeration of the earlier Senecan style against which the plain style of the Royal Society had been a reaction ("Further Comment on Constable and Collier," *PQ*, 24 [1945], 120).

18. P. 75. Spingarn is perhaps too generous to Rymer in discussing this point (*Essays*, I, lxxiv).

and claimed more for untutored judgment, largely because he deliberately limited his criticism to those points he regarded as most apparent and most fundamental.

Rymer is further distinguished from the French school by the emphasis he gives to literary history. Here he draws on the usual medley of 17th-century views. There is the idea of the *translatio studii* by which learning passed from the Hebrews through Chaldaea and Egypt to Greece and Rome and so to the west.<sup>19</sup> Then there is the biological analogy of birth, flowering, decay, and rebirth, according to which modern literature is a second cycle repeating the progress of ancient times. More specifically botanical is the idea that certain climates are more fertile soil for literature than others. This last image allows Rymer to use Cymbeline and the Welsh bards in his claims for literature in England. Through such ideas Rymer can combine imitation of the ancients with a belief in progress.

Rymer's true position here is somewhat obscured by the confusion that mars *A Short View*. The *Othello* critique had been planned much earlier and was fitted awkwardly into the new work. Its disproportionate length suggests a desperate effort on Rymer's part to do the job thoroughly and justifies the Don Quixote image that occurred to 19th-century critics of Rymer. In *Julius Caesar* and *Catiline* he had lost interest, and these critiques offer us little. Rymer had given up hope for any English drama built on present foundations, and under the influence of Racine's last plays and Dacier's criticism he advocated a complete break with present practice and a return to the earliest Greek forms, chorus and all. Disappointment with heroic tragedy may have been partly responsible, and Rymer was following, by extremes, the taste of his own time. Dryden too had come to regard love and honor as mistaken topics of tragedy, and the elaborate code of etiquette of heroic plays had vanished. For Rymer this meant rejection of Corneille and Racine as well (though he never seems to have admired them too much), and nothing was left but a return to the beginning.

Quite naturally Rymer was regarded by his countrymen as a

19. On the general subject see René Wellek, *The Rise of English Literary History* (Chapel Hill, 1941). I have taken this application of the term *translatio studii* from Aubrey L. Williams, *Pope's Dunciad* (London, 1955), pp. 42-8.

champion of French taste against English and of the ancients against the moderns. But these lines are by no means clear and the statement seriously misrepresents Rymer's real position. He used the critical system of the French formalists not because it was French but because it was universal and the product of reason. He had no liking for the French language and seldom praised French literature, regarding the French as lacking the genius necessary to produce the greatest works. Both the Rapin preface and *A Short View* are arguments to prove that the English had a better language and greater potentiality than other nations. Similar arguments will modify the view that Rymer was a fanatical ancient. If one limits the term to meaning that ancient literature was superior to existing modern literature Rymer would of course be an ancient. But in England this was not the main point; faith in reason, belief in the idea of progress and increased capabilities of mankind belonged to the moderns.<sup>20</sup> There are paradoxes: a rationalist critic who judges by the rules of the ancients is apt to be ranked as a modern, as are the antiquarian and the classical scholar. The gentleman of letters who judges by good taste is among the ancients. Or at least that is the view that Swift and later Pope tried to popularize. And certainly by temperament Rymer was more akin to a scientific "modern" scholar like Bentley than to an "ancient" man of letters like Temple.<sup>21</sup>

Had Rymer been more than occasionally a critic his views here might have been clearer. In his two major books he limits himself largely to what is unsatisfactory in English literature; after all, it is the function of the reformer to point out abuses. And Rymer is always aware, though his reader may in annoyance forget, that the purpose of the attack is to uncover error in judgment in order that English literature may progress. In encomium Rymer is less successful. His claims for the special suitability of the English language for poetry are little more than statements of faith, his argument for the early progress of English literature is based on ignorance of almost everything in medieval literature except Provençal poetry, and his use of five lines of Dryden to prove the excellence of con-

20. Richard Foster Jones, *Ancients and Moderns* (St. Louis, 1936).

21. Swift, in "A Digression Concerning Criticks" in *Tale of a Tub*, places Rymer in a family tree which descends through Zoilus to Bentley and Wotton.

temporary English poetry will convince only those who badly wish to be convinced. The preface to Rochester's poems is Rymer's only attempt in praise at any length, and while pleasant and sensible it does not reveal any great powers of analysis. Still, it deals with specific poems and points out excellences of diction and compression of thought that are really there, and few 17th-century critics had developed any technique for criticizing the lyric.

Criticism and appreciation are not the same thing. Rymer could attack Spenser and Cowley and later refer to them as "names as will ever be *sacred* to me,"<sup>22</sup> and he might, had occasion arisen, have admitted virtues in Beaumont and Fletcher. And he closes his last critical work with the statement, "And yet for modern Comedy, doubtless our English are the best in the World." One regrets the absence of illustration. Rymer had quoted Aristophanes and Rabelais with gusto and even approved some comedy in Fletcher. His ideas of decorum and even his use of common sense were tools that could have been profitably applied to Restoration comedy. But they were not, and so, while Rymer praised English literature in general, and epic, lyric, and comedy in particular, he is known almost entirely for his condemnation of tragedy, and as a critic who exhibits his blind spots for our examination and only hints at his sounder judgments.

## III

Study of Rymer's specific influence is made difficult by the fact that his critical principles, insofar as they are not common to the age, are those of the French formalist critics. Rymer helped to popularize their ideas in England, but they were making their way without him, and it is not always possible to isolate Rymer's contribution. The merest glance at the evidence shows that Rymer's initial reputation was high and that he had immediate influence on English criticism; after publication of *A Short View* the attitude toward him became hostile, but his influence remained strong into the early years of the 18th century.

Rymer's effect on Dryden is most important and is easiest to trace because Dryden usually acknowledges his debt. Actually Dryden was closest to the attitude represented by Rymer before Rymer



started writing. In the arrogant epilogue to *The Conquest of Granada* and the essay in defense of the epilogue (1672) he censured the dramatic poetry of the previous age for about the same faults Rymer was to find—low language, ridiculous plots, violation of decorum. Dryden's standard here was taste, and his arguments were not based on a rigid critical system.<sup>1</sup> Five years later his attitude toward heroic tragedy had changed, and with it his attitude toward Elizabethan drama. Yet his high praise of *Tragedies of the Last Age* has already been noted, and Dryden's efforts to answer this work only show how effective Rymer's arguments were. His first attempt, the so-called *Heads of an Answer to Rymer*, was written on the end papers of the book itself.<sup>2</sup> We catch Dryden thinking to himself, starting several answers one after the other, and occasionally threatening to overthrow the entire system. Dryden's theoretical arguments center in the importance of the fable and the emotions to be raised by tragedy. He grants Rymer's point that we are inferior to the Greeks in the construction of plots, but suggests that we might excel in the other parts of tragedy. He questions

1. The *Defence of the Epilogue* last appeared in the 1678 edition; Dryden omitted it from the 1687 and subsequent editions.

2. The *Heads* were first published in Jacob Tonson's 1711 edition of Beaumont and Fletcher, with the statement that Rymer had sent Dryden the book in 1677 and that Dryden had made several remarks on the blank pages before the beginning and at the end of the book. The volume passed into the hands of David Garrick, and from it Johnson again transcribed the notes as an appendix to his life of Dryden, unaware that they had been previously published. In Johnson's transcript the notes are given in a quite different order. Saintsbury (Dryden, *Works*, 15, 379), also unaware of the Tonson edition, reprinted them from an 18th-century manuscript which he regarded as superior to Johnson's text. Actually Saintsbury's manuscript is only a transcript of the 1711 printing made by W. Harte in 1726. Both G. B. Hill in editing Johnson's *Lives* and Saintsbury assume that Johnson deliberately changed the order. Since Dryden wrote on the blank leaves on the front and back of the volume, it is difficult to say where he began or in what order he used up his blank pages. Johnson's arrangement is slightly superior, but in all probability there is no order that would connect all the paragraphs. Dryden seems to have restarted his argument several times, abandoning half-completed outlines and leaving ideas half developed. Even the manuscript would not help much, and that was burned in 1786 or 1787. The problem is fully discussed by J. M. Osborn, *John Dryden* (New York, 1940), pp. 267–9. Recent evidence, particularly Dryden's letter to Dorset and the recognition that the *Heads* were used in the *Troilus and Cressida* preface, makes the 1677 date certain, and earlier suggestions that Dryden is also answering *A Short View* can be ignored.

whether pity and terror are the only tragic emotions, or whether all the passions, joy, love, anger, and fear, should not be used. Dryden seems to equate emotions imitated by the actors with those raised in the spectators and has no clear theory of the function of pity and fear; there is no mention of catharsis. The function of tragedy is entirely moral, "to reform manners," or "the encouragement of virtue and discouragement of vice." It is not clear how pleasure arises. All this suggests that Dryden had up to this point been content with a rather vague idea of Aristotelian criticism. As we shall see, he soon turned to Rymer's French sources for guidance.

The more concrete arguments in the *Heads* are happier. Dryden points out that the success of the plays Rymer criticized could not be ascribed only to the actors, and that if the English had built on a worse foundation than the Greeks they had at least built well on it. He finally regards Rymer's case as not proved but consisting only of small faults wittily aggravated. What probably endeared the *Heads* to a romantic critic like Saintsbury was the constant threat to storm the Aristotelian citadel: "'Tis not enough that Aristotle has said so, for Aristotle drew his models of tragedy from Sophocles and Euripides; and if he had seen ours, might have changed his mind.'" <sup>3</sup>

Both Tonson's editor, who first printed the *Heads* in 1711, and Saintsbury, who reprinted them, expressed the wish that Dryden had developed them further. The wish was more nearly granted than they had noted, but perhaps with unexpected results. Dryden did work these ideas into a formal treatise and attached the result to his preface to *Troilus and Cressida* (1679), giving it the separate title, "The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy." <sup>4</sup> He had posed the question of how far Shakespeare and Fletcher could be imitated, delaying answer until the end of the essay since a prerequisite was to discover the grounds and reason of all criticism. The inquiry which follows started, as probably did the *Heads*, with Aristotle's definition and listing of the parts of tragedy. It grants in more detail the inadequacy of Shakespeare and Fletcher with respect to plot, then considers more at length the characters or manners. The other

3. Johnson, *Lives*, I, 474.

4. The relation has been noted by F. G. Walcott, "John Dryden's Answer to Thomas Rymer's *The Tragedies of the Last Age*," *PQ*, 15 (1936), 194-214.

parts of tragedy, thoughts and diction, were saved for a later essay which was never written. In the section on characters Dryden partly fulfills the promise of the *Heads* by arguing the excellence of Shakespeare (though not of Fletcher) in this particular. There is strong emphasis upon nobility, consistency, probability, and decorum; wherever in his illustrations Dryden uses Rymer's material he grants, with only slight reservations, Rymer's points. On this side, the essay is reassessing the drama by Rymer's standards and finding much to condemn but much to praise, and we see Dryden trying to make Rymer's materials workable.

The other principal topic of the *Heads* had been emotions and their relation to the function of tragedy. In the *Troilus and Cressida* preface there is a clear distinction between passions depicted on the stage and those to be moved in the audience.<sup>5</sup> Dryden's former worry as to whether pity and terror were the only passions to move in an audience is overcome by citing Le Bossu's argument that the discoverers of a form have the right to set its rules, and Rapin's that these are the tragic emotions because they counterbalance the vices of pride and want of commiseration. From Rapin Dryden also accepts the idea of catharsis, "which is, to rectify or purge our passions, fear and pity," and an explanation of why exercise of these passions is pleasurable.<sup>6</sup> Throughout the essay references to Le Bossu, Rapin, and Rymer are frequent, and even Rymer's style appears in an attack on a passage from *Hamlet*. But Dryden, aware that one must balance beauties against faults, immediately follows this with a speech from *Richard II* singled out for praise. The whole ends with a key quotation from Rapin that the rules are nature reduced to method and are necessary to restrain fancy and bring it into accord with probability. The entire essay is Dryden's answer to the unstated question of how far we can use the methods of Thomas Rymer and French formalism in the study of our earlier tragedies. Dryden's answer is a compromise, but at no point does he quarrel with Rymer's principles. In fact, he shows as much interest in citing rules as Rymer does, and rather more in showing the interconnection of these ideas into a system.

It is hard to say how much this meant in terms of Dryden's dra-

5. Dryden, *Essays*, 1, 220.

6. *Ibid.*, 1, 211, 210, 209.



matic practice. *All for Love* was in hand when Rymer's book came out in August 1677. Since the play was acted the following December it is hard to believe that there could have been any influence on its plan. In the preface there is a flattering mention of Rymer, though Dryden may also have had him in mind in speaking of witty critics who judge of tragedy though their taste is only for comedy.<sup>7</sup> Throughout the preface Dryden is on guard against Rymer's criticisms. He points out that the moral of the play is excellent and that the characters are punished for their faults; he regrets that he could not have made them victims of an involuntary fault, thus raising more pity. He adds that he has observed the inferior parts of tragedy, the unities, and then discusses decorum at length, trying to break away from Rymer's rigid concept.<sup>8</sup> The same strain appears, less clearly marked, in the *Troilus and Cressida* preface even before that essay turns into "The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy." Had Dryden continued with tragedy at this time he would certainly have worked further with Rymer's ideas, but his interests were elsewhere and he did not return to the form until *Don Sebastian* in 1690, and then with the utmost reluctance. By that time Rymer's challenge seemed less pressing, and there were personal reasons for not valuing his ideas too highly.

During the 1680's Rymer contributed to three of the volumes Dryden was editing for Tonson, and the men probably continued friendly in spite of the widening political differences.<sup>9</sup> In an open letter to Dryden after Rymer's attack in *A Short View* Charles Gildon mentions "so many Public Expressions of your Friendship for him, & private Services (as I'm inform'd) done him."<sup>10</sup> Whatever these services were, 1688 allowed obligations to be forgotten and Rymer lampooned Dryden in a scurrilous, exuberant verse epistle.<sup>11</sup> This at least was written in the excitement of the moment and perhaps not intended for publication. The malice in *A Short*

7. *Ibid.*, 1, 200, 195–6.

8. *Ibid.*, 1, 192.

9. Appearance of Rymer's work in Dryden's editions of course means nothing; several of Dryden's enemies were contributors. Dryden has a passing mention of Rymer as an excellent critic in *The Vindication of the Duke of Guise* in 1683 (*Works*, 7, 159).

10. *Miscellaneous Letters*, p. 75.

11. Appendix, item 11.

View four years later had no such excuse, and Dryden responded with vigor in *Examen poeticum* (1693).<sup>12</sup> One can almost regret that the quarrel was not pursued, for Dryden there promised a full criticism of the drama; these "heads of an answer" would have fared better than the earlier ones and given us the views of the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* restated in Dryden's maturity.

Dryden thought the quarrel was to be continued. On August 30, 1693, he wrote to Tonson of a rumor that Queen Mary, suspecting an attack on the government in *Examen poeticum*, "had commanded her Historiographer Rymer, to fall upon my Playes. . . . I doubt not his malice, from a former hint you gave me: & if he be employd, I am confident tis of his own seeking."<sup>13</sup> Whatever truth there may have been in this rumor, by this date Queen Mary had other uses for her historiographer. Publicly Dryden contented himself with a jibe at Thomas Shadwell's successor,

But now, not I, but poetry is curst;  
For Tom the Second reigns like Tom the First,<sup>14</sup>

and an inevitable glance at *Edgar* in the prologue to *Love Triumphant*.<sup>15</sup> A letter to Dennis grants that almost all the faults Rymer has discovered in Shakespeare are truly there and expresses reverence for Rymer's learning, but is otherwise in the spirit of *Examen poeticum*.<sup>16</sup> In the mellow mood of the preface to the *Fables* Dryden can refer noncommittally to "our learned Mr. Rymer," and allow himself to be led astray by Rymer's statements about Chaucer and Provençal.<sup>17</sup>

Insofar as criticism can be distinguished from personal quarrel, we see Dryden first strongly influenced then repelled by Rymer's ideas on tragedy, regarding him first as a reformer and then as a destroyer of the stage. Specific strictures, even those on Shakespeare, are allowed but with a quite different estimate of their importance. Dryden and Rymer are at one in their belief in the English language and the possibility of progress. Dryden to be sure regards

12. See below, p. 228.

13. *Letters*, ed. C. E. Ward (Durham, N.C., 1942), p. 59.

14. "To my Dear Friend Mr. Congreve," ll. 47-8.

15. Ll. 47-50, quoted below, p. 217.

16. *Letters*, pp. 71-2, quoted below, pp. 228-9.

17. *Essays*, 2, 249.

Rymer as of the party of the ancients, but he was writing when the ancients-moderns controversy had scarcely reached England, and he could not foresee how strangely the lines were to alter. Respect for Rymer's learning remained to the end.

Most 17th-century judgments do not vary far from Dryden's. Before 1692 references are few and favorable. The anonymous translator of St. Évremond's *Mixt Essays* (1685) plagiarizes from Rymer, pays tribute to his learning, and allows that "we may justly number him in the first rank of *Criticks*, as having a most accomplish'd *Idea* of Poetry, and the Stage."<sup>18</sup> Langbaine in 1688 listed Rymer along with Jonson, Roscommon, Rapin, Longinus, Boileau, St. Évremond, and Dryden as critics available in English who would heighten our appreciation of correct plays, and in 1691 allowed that "he has an excellent Talent towards *Criticism*."<sup>19</sup> Less seriously Prior pays tribute to the critic while damning the poet:

Rash Man! we paid thee Adoration due,  
That ancient Criticks were excell'd by you:  
Each little Wit to your Tribunal came,  
To hear their Doom, and to secure their Fame:  
But for Respect you servilely sought Praise,  
Slighted the Umpire's Palm to court the Poet's Bays;  
While wise Reflections, and a grave Discourse,  
Declin'd to *Zoons*; a *River* for a *Horse*.<sup>20</sup>

18. This preface is reprinted in Dryden, *Essays*, 2, 313-14.

19. *Momus triumphans* (London, 1688), preface; *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets* (Oxford, 1691), pp. 433-4.

20. "A Satyr on the Modern Translators, 1684," first published in *Poems on the Affairs of State*. The last line refers to Rymer's most unhappy utterance outside of *Edgar*. In his translation of Ovid's execration upon a river (*Amores*, III, 6) he produced:

No holding thee, ill-manner'd upstart Floud.  
Not my Love-tes can make thee stay thy course,  
Thou—Zounds, thou art a—River for a horse.

The poem contains equally unfortunate lines, but this one became the label for Rymer's verse. Gildon wrote, "And for his Poetry, from the *Heroic Tragedy* of *Edgar* to the *River Zounds*, he discovers not the least Genius, nor Tast of it" (*Miscellaneous Letters*, p. 68). In *A New Session of the Poets* (London, 1700), p. 3, Apollo addresses Rymer:

How durst thou, Caitiff, *Shakespear* to asperse,  
Thou wretchedst Rymer in the Universe!

After the publication of *A Short View* Rymer's attack on *Othello* alone is remembered, and his full position scarcely gains an adequate hearing. Oddly, Gildon and Dennis, the two who attempted formal answers to *A Short View*, eventually did the most to further Rymer's ideas. The case of Gildon is simpler. His answer to Rymer in *Miscellaneous Letters* showed mental agility rather than logical thought.<sup>21</sup> In 1699, revising Langbaine, he grudgingly admitted that Rymer merited praise for the Rapin preface, attacked his view of Shakespeare, and (oddly) mentioned specifically his love for poetry.<sup>22</sup> Gildon scarcely appeared again as critic until 1710 when he supplemented Rowe's edition of Shakespeare with "An Essay on the Art, Rise, and Progress of the Stage" and "Remarks on the Plays of Shakespear," by which time he had moved well toward Rymer's position. In 1718 followed *The Complete Art of Poetry* and in 1721 *The Laws of Poetry*, both titles that suggest the method of formalism. These works are based almost entirely on Rymer and the French school of rules, Dacier's ideas appearing most frequently. The position is extreme. Shakespeare pleases only where he has followed the rules, and without rules there can be no standard of judgment. Indeed, there is no point in even arguing about the rules unless we are willing to question things that have been accepted as long as the problems of Euclid.<sup>23</sup> To be sure, there is such witchery in Shakespeare that Gildon's judgment is no longer free to see the gross and evident faults; still he insists that nothing out of nature, nothing contrary to verisimilitude can please.<sup>24</sup> He defends Rymer even against Dryden:

This unaccountable Biggotry of the Town, to the very Errors of *Shakespear*, was the Occasion of Mr. *Rymer's* Criticisms,

The Muses Streams on thee have lost their Force,  
Zounds! *Helicon's* a River for an Horse.

Tom Brown joined in:

Nor gentle *Ovid* e'er did force  
To zounds a River for a Horse.

(*Works*, London, 1708, 1, 68.)

21. See below, pp. 229–30.

22. *The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets* (London, 1699), pp. 119–20.

23. Rowe, *Shakespeare*, 7, vii.

24. *Ibid.*, 7, v, viii.

and drove him as far into the contrary Extream. I am far from approving his Manner of treating our Poet; tho' Mr. *Dryden* owns, that all, or most of the Faults he has found, are Just; but adds this odd Reflection: And yet, says he, Who minds the Critick, and who admires *Shakespear* less? That was as much as to say; Mr. *Rymer* has indeed made good his Charge, and yet the Town admir'd his Errors still: which I take to be a greater Proof of the Folly and abandon'd Taste of the Town, than of any Imperfections in the *Critic*; which, in my Opinion, expos'd the Ignorance of the Age he liv'd in.<sup>25</sup>

Gildon pays Rymer the further tribute of borrowing to the point of plagiarism. *The Complete Art of Poetry* is admittedly a compilation and he makes general acknowledgement in the introduction. Many of the generalizations from *Tragedies of the Last Age* are included, as is the entire history of the stage in *A Short View*, and the sections on Provençal poetry are given almost in full. On the whole, Gildon's criticism is entirely at second hand and seldom is it clearly thought out, yet it helped carry on the ideas of Rymer and of Rymer's sources.

John Dennis is a far more important figure and is one of the few critics in this tradition who can still be read with pleasure and profit. Dennis knew thoroughly the French critics whom Rymer had used. To these he added a Longinian emphasis upon passion and the role of religion in poetry to build a criticism that was peculiarly his own. Sometimes we find in Dennis an idea or device we can safely trace to Rymer, more often a statement of principle that could come either from Rymer or from the French. One cannot easily say how much of the mixture Rymer was responsible for, or how close Dennis felt himself to the older critic's position. Dennis' first work, *The Impartial Critick*, was an attack on Rymer, and *Remarks upon Prince Arthur* in 1696 was an attack on Blackmore who had owed much to Rymer. Neither work, however, attacked the rules to make its points, and both relied heavily on Le Bossu and Dacier for authority. Dennis' easy style of *The Impartial Critick* was in the second work modified by using Rymer's technique to attack indi-

25. *Ibid.*, 7, iv. The statement is reprinted almost verbatim in *The Laws of Poetry* (London, 1721), p. 157, and Rymer is again defended there (p. 207). The Dryden opinion cited is from *Letters*, pp. 71-2, quoted below, pp. 228-9.

vidual passages. It is in controversial works that one would expect to find the clearest evidences of Rymer's style, and most of Dennis' works are controversial. The *Remarks upon Cato* (1713) are an excellent illustration:

The dire effects of Civil discord were known to all Mankind, long before *Cato* was writ; and the only instruction that can be drawn from them, since in this Tragedy, the Invaders of Liberty are seen to Triumph, and the Defenders of it to Perish, must be this, That Fools and Knaves should have a care how they invade the Liberties of their Country, lest Good and Wise Men suffer by it, or that Good and Wise Men should have a care how they defend those Liberties, lest Fools and Knaves should Triumph.<sup>26</sup>

This is of course patterned after Rymer's treatment of the moral in *Othello*, but we are not limited to verbal echoes; probability, decorum, the need for moral instruction, and poetic justice are all emphasized, the last in language that showed that Dennis had Rymer's argument fresh in his mind.<sup>27</sup> There is even the same fondness for laying down minor rules: a Stoic cannot be a hero in tragedy; a hypocrite can appear only in comedy.<sup>28</sup>

The *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Shakespear* (1712) marks perhaps Dennis' closest approach to Rymer. Dennis still lays stress on the beauties of Shakespeare, but faults receive prominent mention. Shakespeare did not know the rules, nor had he read Horace and Aristotle, or he would not have violated poetic justice and written fables without morals. The suggestion for rewriting

26. *Works*, 2, 45

27. " 'Tis certainly the Duty of every Tragick Poet, by an exact Distribution of a Poetical Justice, to imitate the Divine Dispensation, and to inculcate a particular Providence. 'Tis true indeed upon the Stage of the World the Wicked sometimes prosper, and the Guiltless suffer. But that is permitted by the Governour of the World, to shew from the Attribute of his infinite Justice that there is a Compensation in Futurity, to prove the Immortality of the Human Soul, and the Certainty of future Rewards and Punishments. But the Poetical Persons in Tragedy exist no longer than the Reading or the Representation; the whole Extent of their Entity is circumscribed by those; and therefore during that Reading or Representation, according to their Merits or Demerits, they must be punish'd or rewarded" (*Works*, 2, 49). For the parallel argument in Rymer see below, pp. 22-3, 27-8.

28. *Works*, 2, 49-50, 53



*Julius Caesar* owes something to Rymer's suggestions for recasting the story of *Rollo*. There is the inevitable stress on decorum: "Witness *Menenius* . . . whom he has made an arrant Buffoon, which is a great Absurdity. For he might as well have imagin'd a grave majestick *Jack-Pudding*, as a Buffoon in a *Roman Senator*." <sup>29</sup>

Such instances could be multiplied and Dennis' favorable mentions of Rymer could be cited, all without proving much. That there was indebtedness and some similarity of outlook all will grant, and to define the latter more exactly would require an examination of Dennis far beyond the scope of these paragraphs. Dennis is a more voluminous, more serious, and an abler critic than Rymer. A desire to dissociate the two is understandable. The case has been admirably put by Dennis' editor, E. N. Hooker:

But Dennis was much too wise a man to think that the rules could be applied strictly. . . . Again, he did not believe that the methods of the ancients, suited to a particular climate and to audiences of a certain temperament, could be successfully transferred to different climates with audiences of notably different tempers. The doctrine of poetic justice as Dennis developed it was much closer to Aristotle than to Rymer. Although he sometimes interpreted the rule concerning the "convenience" or decorum of characters to mean that characters must conform to type, he set much less store by it than did Rymer, for he loved Shakespeare, who broke the rule, whereas Rymer scorned Shakespeare for his negligence. As to the validity of common sense in criticism Dennis diverged sharply from Rymer; though he conceded that common sense might suffice in determining the value of certain obvious features in a work, yet he insisted that to perform the highest function of a critic a man must have genius. Dennis was not a member of the school of Rymer, nor of the school of common sense. <sup>30</sup>

This is a fair statement of how Dennis goes beyond Rymer and how he frees himself from the rigidity of the French critics. Genius, imagination, a recognition of the sublime and of the grace beyond

29. *Works*, 2, 5.

30. Dennis, *Works*, 2, lxxvii.



the reach of art are lacking in Rymer, hence his failure with Milton and Shakespeare. Dennis allowed violations of minor rules provided the major ends were attained, but so must every member of the school of rules. If we cannot illustrate easily from Rymer it is because Rymer's favorable criticism is scant, and one does not make allowances when criticizing adversely; certainly Dennis did not when he attacked Addison and Pope. Dennis carries the idea of poetic justice further than Rymer, but he ascribes the popularization of it to Rymer, echoes Rymer's wording of the idea, and in no way contradicts it.<sup>31</sup> Both Rymer and Dennis thought they were close to Aristotle in this matter; by modern readings of the *Poetics* neither was. Rymer argues that rules are universal, whereas Dennis allows modifications by climate, especially when defending Shakespeare. The difference appears greater than it is, and after the concession is made the principle of the rules is still intact.<sup>32</sup> The common sense issue remains. It has been argued earlier that it is confusing to place Rymer with the enemies of formalism in a school of common sense, since Rymer never uses common sense as a weapon to attack the rules. If Rymer in his own criticism does not rise to the development of a system at least he invokes one. Dennis does add the qualification of genius, but this is superimposed on a rationalism and a faith in rules that he shares with Rymer.

We descend to Sir Richard Blackmore, who admired Rymer and in one weary moment suggested that he, together with St. Évremond, be put in charge of the nation's wit:

St. *E—m—t* and *R—r* both are fit  
 To oversee the Coining of our Wit.  
 Let these be made the Masters of Essay,  
 They'll every Piece of Metal touch and weigh,  
 And tell which is too light, which has too much Allay.<sup>33</sup>

No stranger combination of critics could have been imagined. Nor did it take Tom Brown to point out that Blackmore's own credit

31. *Works*, 2, 436, and note 27 above.

32. *Works*, 2, lxxix ff.

33. *Satyr against Wit* (London, 1700), p. 9, reprinted in Spingarn, *Essays*, 3, 329.

at this bank of wit would be very slight.<sup>34</sup> He had already overdrawn his account with his first two epics, *Prince Arthur* (1695) and *King Arthur* (1697), with prefaces showing a faith in the rules as great as any man's and admitting allegiance to the great critics of the epic, Rapin, Dacier, Le Bossu, and to "the Judicious Remarks of our own *excellent Critick*, Mr. Rymer, who seems to have better consider'd these matters and to have gone farther into them than any of the *English Nation*." <sup>35</sup> He follows his sources in insisting that the end of poetry is to reform manners and instruct, and in the attention he pays to the decorum of his characters. Indeed, Blackmore's faith in rules eventually led to Pope's "Receipt to Make an Epick Poem," an attack on those who use rules as a substitute for genius.<sup>36</sup> We can see Rymer's influence more specifically in Blackmore's discussion of tragedies, even in his favorable comments on *The Mourning Bride*.<sup>37</sup> Beyond all this, Blackmore is a strenuous moralist, launching out against the immorality of the stage and using violations of decorum as one of his weapons. In this we see a predecessor of Jeremy Collier.

And—be it said with regret—Jeremy Collier was Rymer's most influential follower. The very title of his attack, *A Short View of the Immorality and Prophaneness of the English Stage, Together with the Sense of Antiquity upon this Argument*, suggests the title of Rymer's work. This attack in 1698 should not have been unexpected, and where literary critics were belaboring the moral issue it should have been no surprise to find a narrow moralist taking over the ideas of an outstanding critic and shaping them to his own uses. It has long been recognized that the effectiveness of Collier's initial attack on the stage was due partly to his epigrammatic style but more particularly to his use of critical tenets that had gone

34. *Commendatory Verses on . . . the Satyr Against Wit* (London, 1700). For the controversy, see R. C. Boys, *Sir Richard Blackmore and the Wits* (Ann Arbor, 1949).

35. Preface to *Prince Arthur*, in Spingarn, *Essays*, 3, 240.

36. *Guardian*, 78, later incorporated into *Peri Bathous*. Joseph Warton was wrong in regarding this paper as an attack on Le Bossu, but his note is still valuable as a late 18th-century reaction to French formalism; see Loyd Douglas, "A Severe Animadversion on Bossu," *PMLA*, 62 (1947), 690–706.

37. Spingarn, *Essays*, 3, 228; Blackmore, *King Arthur* (London, 1697), pp. vii–viii.

virtually unchallenged. Taking both these devices from Rymer, Collier could pose as a tolerant man of common sense whose aim was to correct and not to abolish the English drama.<sup>38</sup> The abolitionist had donned the cloak of the reformer; Dryden had accused Rymer of doing exactly the same thing, but that had been forgotten.

Collier is not a critic, and there is little point in discussing his professed views of the drama as though he were. He will talk, when it suits him, of the unities and of probability, merely because they are part of a system he is using for other purposes. He could have got and perhaps did get his knowledge of dramatic criticism from the French, but he recognized the effectiveness of Rymer's methods and used them. Naturally he stressed most the fable and its moral, poetic justice, and the idea of decorum. He considered it axiomatic that the function of the drama was to instruct. Even Rymer's style is taken over; like others who did this, Collier makes it a little more vulgar: "Had *Shakespear* secur'd this point for his young Virgin *Ophelia*, the *Play* had been better contriv'd. Since he was resolv'd to drown the Lady like a Kitten, he should have set her a swimming a little sooner. To keep her alive only to sully her Reputation, and discover the Rankness of her Breath, was very Cruel." <sup>39</sup> Rymer's ideas of decorum are made even sharper: "*Manly* goes on, and declares *He would call a Rascal by no other Title, tho' his Father had left him a Dukes*. That is, he would call a Duke a Rascal. This, I confess, is very much *Plain Dealing*." <sup>40</sup> The critique of *The Relapse* is Collier's most elaborate analysis of a single play, and it follows with remarkable fidelity Rymer's examination of *Othello*. He starts by giving the fable, criticizes the title, then deduces the moral: "1st. That all *Younger Brothers* should be careful to run out of their Circumstances as Fast, and as Ill as they can. . . . 2ly. That when a Man is press'd, his business is not to be govern'd by Scruples, or formalize upon Conscience and Honesty." <sup>41</sup>

Collier's principal attack was against comedy, and until he dropped the critic's mask his deadliest weapon was the idea of

38. Joseph Wood Krutch, *Comedy and Conscience after the Restoration* (New York, 1924), *passim*; Spingarn, *Essays*, 1, lxxxiv ff.

39. *A Short View of the Immorality and Prophaneness of the English Stage* (London, 1698), p. 10.

40. *Ibid.*, reprinted in Spingarn, *Essays*, 3, 274.

41. Spingarn, *Essays*, 3, 278.

decorum. In tragedy (to which Rymer restricts the argument) a case can be made for idealized figures or generic types; but high comedy deals with deviations from the norm, to which our response is laughter rather than a demand for justice. But Collier applied the principles for tragedy to comedy and insisted on ideal types, poetic justice, and a moral fable there. These criteria led inevitably to sentimental comedy.

The result of Collier's method was that critics could not answer him without answering Rymer. On specific points they could succeed, just as they had with Rymer. Dennis, who saw most clearly where Collier's attack was headed, was able to establish the usefulness (or, rather, potential usefulness) of the stage, but only by granting most of Collier's points. The dramatists, notably Vanbrugh, were able to refute specific charges of immorality. But this pruning away left Collier's main arguments unshaken. As long as the narrow idea that all drama must teach by precept and example remained valid, no real answer was possible.

Rymer is often mentioned by his contemporaries and immediate successors. Too often we are given merely the discrepancy between his critical standards and the value of his own tragedy; he is mentioned as a good critic or as a bad critic, most often as a critic of Shakespeare; sometimes one of his specific judgments is answered. These tell us little except that Rymer was enrolled among the critics and that his name would be recognized. Editors of Shakespeare as late as Warburton showed some concern for dealing with Rymer's strictures; sketches for histories of English literature until the time of Warton used *A Short View* as their point of departure.<sup>42</sup> Apart from such specific points one cannot in the 18th century speak of

42. Some specific points are taken up in the notes to *A Short View*. For the sketches of literary history, see Ruffhead, *A Life of Alexander Pope* (London, 1769), p. 425, and Gray, *Correspondence*, ed. Toynbee and Whibley (Oxford, 1935), 3, 1122-5; I have discussed these in "Chaucer and the School of Provence," *PQ*, 25 (1946), pp. 321-42. It may be worth removing one error about Rymer's reputation. W. R. Chetwood, *A General History of the Stage* (London, 1749), p. 24, apparently quotes Addison as calling Rymer "the greatest Critic of the Age he lived in." But the opinion is merely Chetwood's own. He had quoted *Tatler*, 167 (Steele, not Addison), on Betterton, and went on to quote Rymer on Hart, but inadvertently continued the quotation marks in the sentence linking the two passages. Actually Addison knew so little about Rymer that he credited him with a critique of *King Lear* (*Spectator*, 592).

the influence of Rymer's criticism. That had been merged into the general neoclassical creed. Emphasis shifted from rules to taste and good sense and there was less citing of authority. One suspects that many 18th-century opinions of Rymer are based on only slight knowledge. For England we can cite two solidly based opinions, one informal, the other formal. First, Pope in conversation with Spence:

Chaucer and his contemporaries, borrowed a good deal from the Provençal poets: the best account of whom, in our language, is in Rymer's piece on Tragedy.—"Rymer a learned and strict critic?" —"Ay, that's exactly his character. He is generally right, though rather too severe in his opinion of the particular plays he speaks of; and is, on the whole, one of the best critics we ever had." <sup>43</sup>

The other, Dr. Johnson:

The different manner and effect with which critical knowledge may be conveyed was perhaps never more clearly exemplified than in the performances of Rymer and Dryden. . . . With Dryden we are wandering in quest of Truth, whom we find, if we find her at all, drest in the graces of elegance; and if we miss her, the labour of the pursuit rewards itself: we are led only through fragrance and flowers. Rymer, without taking a nearer, takes a rougher way; every step is to be made through thorns and brambles, and Truth, if we meet her, appears repulsive by her mien and ungraceful by her habit. Dryden's criticism has the majesty of a queen; Rymer's has the ferocity of a tyrant. <sup>44</sup>

Elsewhere Rymer had one belated disciple. In 1776 the French Academy, whose founders had helped form Rymer's critical theory, heard a letter in which the extravagances of Shakespeare were pointed out at some length. In concluding, the author, Voltaire, cited his authority:

Les mêmes réflexions que je fais ici devant vous, messieurs, ont été faites en Angleterre par plusieurs gens de lettres. Rymer

43. Spence, *Anecdotes*, ed. Singer (London, 1820), pp. 172-3.

44. Life of Dryden, in *Lives*, I, 412-13.

même, le savant Rymer, dans un livre dédié au fameux comte Dorset, en 1693, sur l'excellence et la corruption de la tragédie, pousse la sévérité de sa critique jusqu'à dire "qu'il n'y a point de singe en Afrique, point de babouin qui n'ait plus de goût que Shakespeare." Permettez-moi, messieurs, de prendre un milieu entre Rymer et le traducteur de Shakespeare, et de ne regarder ce Shakespeare ni comme un dieu, ni comme un singe.<sup>45</sup>

Despite the pretended balance of the last sentence, Voltaire in his late years was more apt to see in Shakespeare a pug in Barbary than a god. He needed to borrow neither critical principles nor malicious technique from Rymer.<sup>46</sup> In this attack, however, he borrowed both. He apparently had read *A Short View* carefully: there are a few verbal echoes, and he translates Rymer's synopsis of *Gorboduc*, though without praising the play. He shares Rymer's view that Shakespeare was still too close to the strolling players. Like Rymer he is deaf to certain beauties and invents rules to justify his deafness. His first selection is Iago's speech to Brabantio which Rymer had found so shocking. Concerning the line in *Hamlet*, "Not a mouse stirring," which Lord Kames had dared to set against a passage from Racine's *Iphigénie*, he bursts forth: "Oui, monsieur, un soldat peut répondre ainsi dans un corps de garde; mais non pas sur le théâtre, devant les premières personnes d'une nation, qui s'expriment noblement, et devant qui il faut s'exprimer de même."<sup>47</sup>

Passing into the 19th century one finds either vituperation or amused tolerance. For Sir Walter Scott, "Nothing can be more disgusting than the remarks of Rymer, who creeps over the most beautiful passages of the drama with eyes open only to their defects, or their departure from scholastic precept. . . . there is sometimes

45. *Œuvres* (Paris, 1877-85), 30, 363. In a private letter two years later he writes, "Rymer a eu bien raison de dire que Shakespeare n'était qu'un vilain singe" (*ibid.*, 50, 74).

46. For example: "Dans une tragédie de Shakespeare nommée *Othello*, cet Othello, qui est un nègre, donne deux baisers à sa femme avant de l'étrangler. Cela paraît abominable aux honnêtes gens; mais des partisans de Shakespeare disent que c'est la belle nature, surtout dans un nègre" (*ibid.*, 17, 529).

47. *Ibid.*, 30, 363.



justice, though never mercy, in his criticism.”<sup>48</sup> From here it is but a step to the remark Macaulay threw into a parenthesis, “Rymer . . . the worst critic that ever lived.”<sup>49</sup>

Rymer was now reserved for fanciers of curious learning, who occasionally reported their amusement at so odd a discovery. The first to come upon this strange critic was Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd, who at least gave to Rymer the dignity of place as subject for the opening article of the *Retrospective Review* in 1820. After a summary of Rymer’s views, a tribute to his learning, and amused glances at the sanctity of rules, he admits that an honest, sophisticated hatred of Shakespeare is better than maudlin admiration, and concludes, “Their author has a heartiness, an earnestness almost romantic, which we cannot despise, though directed against our idol. . . . He is the Don Quixote of criticism. Like the hero of Cervantes, he is roused to avenge fictitious injuries, and would demolish the scenic exhibition in his disinterested rage.”<sup>50</sup> The figure of Don Quixote also suggested itself to Isaac Disraeli in 1841: “Rymer grasped the new and formidable weapon of modern criticism. Armed at all points with a Grecian helmet and a Gallic lance, this literary Quixote sallied forth to attack all the giants or the windmills of the English theatre.”<sup>51</sup> Rymer was no longer a critic to be contended with, and even an editor of *Othello* could speak tolerantly of “that headlong torrent of amusing abuse of Shakespeare.”<sup>52</sup>

In this neglect the 19th century showed a lack of interest in the history of criticism and some smugness about its own critical taste. The turn of the century, when the history of criticism became a recognized field for study, produced nothing kindlier. Saintsbury, with full awareness of the gravity of the verdict, supported Macaulay’s sentence;<sup>53</sup> Lounsbury’s decision was equally adverse.<sup>54</sup> Spingarn was the first to see Rymer’s school in historical context and without prejudice, with real understanding of what Rymer

48. Dryden, *Works*, 15, 379. There is a somewhat more temperate statement in Scott, *Miscellaneous Prose Works* (Edinburgh, 1840), 6, 366–7.

49. “Essay on Boswell’s Life of Johnson,” *Works* (London, 1898), 12, 379.

50. Talfourd, *Critical and Miscellaneous Writings* (Philadelphia, 1852), p. 62.

51. *Amenities of Literature* (New York, 1864), 2, 213.

52. H. H. Furness, *Othello* (Philadelphia, 1886), p. 48.

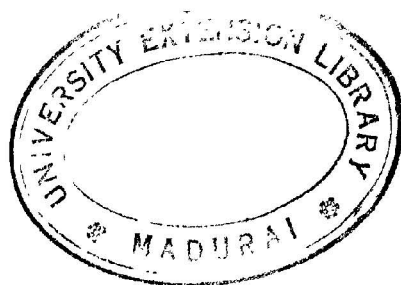
53. *History of Criticism* (Edinburgh, 1900–03), 2, 397.

54. *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist* (New York, 1901), pp. 227–44.

was trying to do in his time.<sup>55</sup> He made clear the difference between Rymer's specific judgments and the methods which prompted them, and also developed the information on which all later study of Rymer has been based. Since Spingarn there have been numerous studies of aspects of neoclassical criticism, and in most of these Rymer's importance is recognized. But historical criticism passes no formal verdicts, and one can only attempt a rash summary of what appears to be the present judgment. Rymer's bad taste and failure to grant any role to the imagination are admitted; his strictures on the Beaumont and Fletcher plays are allowed where probability of plot is concerned but are more doubtful where his standard is decorum of character; his attack on *Othello* remains a challenge since the attacks on probability seem valid and the play does raise special problems of moral and decorum; his scholarship is admitted and his view of literary history is—if on historical grounds only—worthy of study; his system and his method of analysis have a clarity which compels interest though not acceptance.

55. *Essays*, 1, lxxiii–lxxxi.

THE CRITICAL WORKS OF THOMAS RYMER



REFLECTIONS ON ARISTOTLE'S  
TREATISE OF POESIE. CONTAINING  
THE NECESSARY, RATIONAL, AND  
UNIVERSAL RULES FOR EPICK,  
DRAMATICK, AND THE OTHER  
SORTS OF POETRY. WITH  
REFLECTIONS ON THE WORKS OF  
THE ANCIENT AND MODERN  
POETS, AND THEIR FAULTS NOTED

BY R. RAPIN

THE PREFACE OF THE TRANSLATOR

THE ARTIST would not take pains to polish a Diamond, if none besides himself were quick-sighted enough to discern the flaw; And Poets would grow negligent, if the Criticks had not a strict eye over their miscarriages. Yet it often happens, that this eye is so distorted by envy or ill nature, that it sees nothing aright. Some Criticks are like Wasps, that rather annoy the Bees, than terrifie the Drones.

For this sort of Learning, our Neighbour Nations have got far the start of us; in the last *Century*, *Italy* swarm'd with Criticks, where, amongst many of less note, *Castelvetro* opposed all comers; and the famous Academy *La Crusca* was alwayes impeaching some or other of the best Authors. *Spain*, in those dayes, bred great Wits, but, I think, was never so crowded, that they needed to fall out and

quarrel amongst themselves. But from *Italy*, *France* took the Cudgels; and though some light strokes passed in the dayes of *Marot*, *Baif*, &c. yet they fell not to it in earnest, nor was any noble Contest amongst them, till the *Royal Academy* was founded, and Cardinal *Richlieu* encouraged and rallied all the scattered Wits under his Banner. Then *Malherb* reform'd their ancient licentious *Poetry*; and *Corneille's Cid* rais'd many Factions amongst them. At this time with us many great Wits flourished, but *Ben Johnson*, I think, had all the Critical learning to himself; and till of late years *England* was as free from Criticks, as it is from *Wolves*, that a harmless well-meaning Book might pass without any danger. But now this priviledge, whatever extraordinary Talent it requires, is usurped by the most ignorant: and they who are least acquainted with the game, are aptest to bark at every thing that comes in their way. Our fortune is, *Aristotle*, on whom our Author makes these *Reflections*, came to this great work better accomplished. He who Criticis'd on the ancient and his contemporary Philosophers; on *Pythagoras*, *Democritus*, *Empedocles*, *Heraclitus*, *Epicharmus*, *Parmenides*, *Xenophanes*, *Melissus*, *Anaxagoras*, *Protagoras*, *Eudoxus*, *Solon*, *Anaximander*, *Anaximenes*, *Plato*, *Speusippus*; who examin'd and censur'd the *Laws* and *Polities* of *Minos*, *Lycurgus*, *Solon*, *Hippodamus*, *Phaleas*, and all the other Commonwealths; 'tis he, I say, that undertakes this Province, to pass a judgment on the *Poets*, and their Works; and him Antiquity first honoured with the name of *Critick*.

It is indeed suspected that he dealt not alwayes fairly with the Philosophers, misreciting sometimes, and misinterpreting their opinions. But I find him not tax'd of that injustice to the *Poets*, in whose favour he is so ingenious, that to the disadvantage of his own profession, he declares, *That Tragedy more conduces to the instruction of Mankind, than even Philosophy it self*. And however cryed down in the Schools, and vilified by some modern Philosophers; since Men have had a taste for *good sense*, and could discern the beauties of correct writing, he is prefer'd in the *politest* Courts of *Europe*, and by the *Poets* held in great veneration. Not that these can servilely yield to his Authority, who, of all men living, affect liberty. The truth is, what *Aristotle* writes on this Subject, are not the dictates of his own magisterial will, or dry deductions of his

Metaphysicks: But the Poets were his Masters, and what was their practice, he reduced to principles. Nor would the *modern Poets* blindly resign to this practice of the *Ancients*, were not the Reasons convincing and clear as any demonstration in *Mathematicks*. 'Tis only needful that we understand them, for our consent to the truth of them. The *Arabians*, 'tis confess'd, who glory in their *Poets* and *Poetry*, more than all the world besides; and who, I suppose, first brought the art of *Riming* into *Europe*, observe but little these Laws of *Aristotle*: yet \**Averois* rather chooses to blame the practice of his Countreymen as vicious, than to allow any imputation on the doctrine of this *Philosopher* as imperfect. *Fancy* with them is predominant, is wild, vast and unbridled, o're which their *judgment* has little command or authority: hence their conceptions are monstrous, and have nothing of exactness, nothing of resemblance or proportion.

The Author of these *Reflections* is as well known amongst the *Criticks*, as *Aristotle* to the *Philosophers*: never man gave his judgment so generally, and never was judgment more free and impartial. He might be thought an enemy to the *Spaniards*, were he not as sharp on the *Italians*; and he might be suspected to envy the *Italians*, were he not as severe on his own Countreymen. These Nations make it a Problem, whether a *Dutchman* or *German* may be a *Wit* or no; and our Author finds none worthy of his Censure amongst them, except *Heinsius* and *Grotius*. Amongst us he gives *Buchanan* a particular Character: but for such as writ in the *English* Tongue, he has not, I presume, understood the language so well, to pass a judgment on them: onely in general he confesses, that we have a *Genius* for *Tragedy* above all other people; one reason he gives we cannot allow of, viz. *The disposition of our Nation, which, he saith, is delighted with cruel things*. 'Tis ordinary to judge of Peoples manners and inclinations, by their publick diversions; and Travellers, who see some of our *Tragedies*, may conclude us certainly the cruellest minded people in *Christendom*.

In another place this Author sayes of us, *That we are men in an Island, divided from the rest of the world, and that we love blood in our sports*. And, perhaps, it may be true, that on our Stage are more Murders than on all the Theatres in *Europe*. And they who

\* On *Arist. de Poet.*



have not time to learn our Language, or be acquainted with our Conversation, may there in three hours time behold so much bloodshed as may affright them from the inhospitable shore, as from the Cyclops Den. Let our Tragedy-makers consider this, and examine whether it be the disposition of the People, or their own *Caprice* that brings this Censure on the best natur'd Nation under the Sun.

His other Reason is our Language, *which*, he says, *is proper for great expressions*. The *Spanish* is big and fastuous, proper only for *Rodomontades*, and compar'd with other Languages, is like the Kettle-drum to Musick.

The *Italian* is fittest for *Burlesque*, and better becomes the mouth of *Petrolin* and *Arloquin* in their *Farces*, than any *Heroick* character. The perpetual termination in vowels is childish, and themselves confess, rather sweet than grave.

The *French* wants sinews for great and heroick Subjects, and even in Love-matters, by their own confession, is a very Infant;\* the *Italians* call it the *Kitchin-language*, it being so copious and flowing on those occasions.

The *German* still continues rude and unpolisht, not yet filed and civiliz'd by the commerce and intermixture with strangers to that smoothness and humanity which the *English* may boast of.

The dissyllable Rimes force the *Italians* and *Spaniards* on the *Stanza* in *Heroicks*; which, besides many other disadvantages, renders the Language unfit for *Tragedy*.

The *French* now onely use the long *Alexandrins*, and would make up in length what they want in strength and substance; yet are they too faint and languishing, and attain not that *numerosity* which the dignity of Heroick Verse requires, and which is ordinary in an *English* Verse of *ten syllables*. But I shall not here examine the weight, the fulness, the vigour, force, gravity, and the fitness of the *English* for *Heroick Poesie* above all other Languages; the world expecting these matters learnedly and largely discussed in a particular Treatise on that Subject.†

But from our Language proceed to our Writers, and with the freedom of this Author, examine how unhappy the greatest *English* Poets have been through their ignorance or negligence of these fundamental Rules and Laws of *Aristotle*. I shall leave the Author of

\* *Mesnadore. & al. Lenga di Masseritie.*

† *Sheringham.*

the *Romance of the Rose* (whom Sir Richard Baker makes an *Englishman*) for the *French*\* to boast of, because he writ in their Language. Nor shall I speak of *Chaucer*, in whose time our Language, I presume, was not capable of any Heroick Character. Nor indeed was the most polite Wit of *Europe* in that Age sufficient for a great *design*. That was the Age of *Tales*, *Ballads*, and *Roundelays*. *Petrarch* in those days attempted the *Epick* strain in his *Africa*; but though most happy in his *Sonnets* and *Madrigals*, was far too feeble for a work of that weight and importance.

*Spencer*, I think, may be reckon'd the first of our *Heroick Poets*; he had a large spirit, a sharp judgment, and a *Genius for Heroick Poesie*, perhaps above any that ever writ since *Virgil*. But our misfortune is, he wanted a true *Idea*; and lost himself, by following an unfaithful guide. Though besides *Homer* and *Virgil* he had read *Tasso*, yet he rather suffer'd himself to be misled by *Ariosto*; with whom blindly rambling on *marvellous* Adventures, he makes no Conscience of *Probability*. All is fanciful and chimerical, without any uniformity, without any foundation in truth; his Poem is perfect *Fairy-land*.

They who can love *Ariosto*, will be ravish'd with *Spencer*; whilst men of juster thoughts lament that such great Wits have miscarried in their Travels for want of direction to set them in the right way. But the truth is, in *Spencer's* time, *Italy* it self was not well satisfied with *Tasso*; and few amongst them would then allow that he had excell'd their *divine Ariosto*. And it was the vice of those Times to affect superstitiously the *Allegory*; and nothing would then be current without a mystical meaning. We must blame the *Italians* for debauching great *Spencer's* judgment; and they cast him on the unlucky choice of the *Stanza*, which in no wise is proper for our Language.

The next for *Epick Poesie*, is Sir *William D'avenant*, his Wit is well known; and in the Preface to his *Gondibert*, appear some strokes of an extraordinary judgment. He is for *unbeaten tracks*, and *new wayes of thinking*; but certainly in his *untry'd Seas* he is no great discoverer.

One design of the *Epick Poets* before him was to adorn their own Countrey, there finding their *Heroes*, and patterns of Virtue; whose

\* *Bellay*. *P'asquier* prefers him to the best of *Italy*.

example\* (as they thought) would have greatest influence and power over Posterity; but this Poet steers a different course, his *Heroes* are all Forreigners: He cultivates a Countrey that is nothing akin to him, 'tis *Lombardy* that reaps the honour of all.

Other Poets chose some *Action* or *Heroe* so illustrious, that the name of the Poem prepared the Reader, and made way for its reception: but in this Poem none can divine, what *great action* he intended to celebrate; nor is the Reader obliged to know whether the *Heroe* be *Turk* or *Christian*. Nor do the first lines give any light or prospect into his *design*. Methinks, though his Religion could not dispense with an *Invocation*, he needed not have scrupled at the *Proposition*: yet he rather chooses to enter in at the top of an house, because the mortals of *mean* and *satisfied minds* go in at the door. And I believe the Reader is not well pleas'd to find his Poem begin with the praises of *Aribert*, when the Title had promised a *Gondibert*. But before he falls on any other business, he presents the Reader with a description of each particular *Heroe*, not trusting their *actions* to speak for them; as former Poets had done. Their practice was fine and artificial, his (he tells us) is a *new way*. Many of his *Characters* have but little of the *Heroick* in them; *Dalga* is a Jilt, proper onely for *Comedy*; *Birtha* for a *Pastoral*; and *Astragon*, in the manner here described, yields no very great ornament to an *Heroick Poem*; nor are his Battels less liable to Censure, than those of *Homer*.

He dares not, as other *Heroick Poets*, heighten the *action* by making Heaven and Hell interest'd, for fear of offending against *probability*; and yet he tells of

—*Threads by patient Parcæ slowly spun.*

And for being dead, his phrase is,

*Heaven call'd him, where peacefully he rules a Star.*

And the *Emerald* he gives to *Birtha*, has a stronger *tang* of the Old Woman, and is a greater *improbability* than all the enchantments in *Tasso*. A just *medium* reconciles the farthest extremes, and due preparation may give credit to the most unlikely Fiction. In *Marino*, *Adonis* is presented with a *Diamond Ring*, where, indeed, the stone

\* Et Pater Æneas & Avunculus excitet Hector.

is much-what of the same nature; but this Present is made by *Venus*: and from a *Goddess* could not be expected a gift of ordinary virtue.

Although a Poet is oblig'd to know all Arts and Sciences, yet he ought discreetly to manage this knowledge. He must have judgment to select what is noble or beautiful, and proper for his occasion. He must by a particular Chymistry extract the essence of things, without soiling his Wit with the gross and trumpery. But some Poets labour to appear skilful with that wretched affectation, they dote on the very terms and *jargon*: exposing themselves rather to be laugh'd at by the Apprentices, than to be admir'd by Philosophers: But whether *D'Avenant* be one of those, I leave others to examine.

The sort of Verse he makes choice of, might, I suppose, contribute much to the vitiating of his stile; for thereby he obliges himself to stretch every period to the end of four lines. Thus the sense is broken perpetually with *parentheses*, the words jumbld in confusion, and a darkness spread over all; that the sense is either not discern'd, or found not sufficient for one just Verse, which is sprinkl'd on the whole *tetrastick*.

In the *Italian* and *Spanish*, where all the *Rimes* are dissyllable, and the percussion stronger, this kind of Verse may be necessary; and yet to temper that grave march, they repeat the same Rime over again, and then they close the *Stanza* with a *Couplet* further to sweeten the severity. But in *French* and *English*, where we rime generally with onely one syllable, the *Stanza* is not allow'd, much less the *alternate* Rime in long Verse; for the sound of the monosyllable Rime is either lost ere we come to its correspondent, or we are in pain by the so long expectation and suspense.

This alternate Rime, and the downright Morality throughout the whole *Canto's* together, shew him better acquainted with the *quatrains* of *Pybrach*, which he speaks of, than with any true Models of *Epick Poesie*.

After all, he is said to have a particular Talent for the *Manners*: his thoughts are great, and there appears something *roughly Noble* throughout this fragment; which, had he been pleased to finish it, would, doubtless, not have been left so open to the attack of Critics.

A more happy *Genius* for *Heroick Poesie*, appears in *Cowley*.

He understood the *purity*, the *perspicuity*, the *majesty* of stile, and the vertue of *numbers*. He could discern what was beautiful and pleasant in Nature, and could express his Thoughts without the least difficulty or constraint. He understood to dispose of the matters, and to manage his Digressions. In short, he understood *Homer* and *Virgil*, and as prudently made his advantage of them.

Yet as it may be lamented, that he carried not on the work so far as he design'd, so it might be wish'd that he had lived to revise what he did leave us: I think the *Troubles of David* is neither title nor matter proper for an *Heroick* Poem; seeing it is rather the *actions*, than his sufferings, that make an *Heroe*: nor can it be defended, by *Homer's Oddyseis*, since *Ulysses's* sufferings conclude with one *great* and *perfect* action.

After all the heavy Censures that jointly from all Criticks have fall'n on *Lucan*, I do a little wonder that this Author should choose *History* for the Subject of his Poem; and a History where he is so strictly ty'd up to the Truth. *Aristotle* tells us, *That Poetry is something more excellent, and more philosophical, than History*, and does not inform us what has been done; but teaches what may, and what ought to be done. And since many particulars in Sacred Story are neither *Heroick*, nor indeed consistent with the common principles of Morality, but of a singular, extraordinary, and unaccountable dispensation; and since in the principal actions all is carried on by *Machine*; how can these examples be propos'd for great persons to imitate? or what foundation for their hopes in *impossibilities*? *Poetry* has no life, nor can have any operation without *probability*: it may indeed amuse the People, but moves not the *Wise*, for whom alone (according to *Pythagoras*\*) it is ordain'd.

Instead of one *illustrious* and *perfect action*, which properly is the subject of an *Epick* Poem; *Cowley* proposes to adorn some several particulars of *David's* life: and these particulars have no necessary relation to the end, nor in any wise lead to the great revolution; *David* is made King, but this is the work of Heaven, not any achievement of his own. He neither did, nor ought to lift a finger for gaining the Crown: he is amongst the *Amalekites*, whilst his work is done without him. This ill choice of a Subject forces the Poet

\* ἀέλω σφεταῖς. &c. Stob.

(how excellent otherwise soever) perpetually on digressions: and *David* is the least part of the Poem.

Some, perhaps, may object, *That he begins not his Poem with all the art and address as might be desired.* *Homer* would make us believe the drawing of *Achilles*, adorn'd with all his glorious actions, a design too vast and impossible: and therefore only proposes his *resentment* of the affront given him by *Agamemnon*; as if any one particular of his life were sufficient to employ the greatest humane Wit with all its *Muses* and divine assistance. *Achilles* could not be *angry*, but Heaven and Earth are engaged, and just matter given for an *Heroick* Poem. Thus whilst he *proposes* but one passage, we conceive a greater *Idea* of the rest than any words could express; and whilst he promises so little, his performances are the more admirable and surprising. But in the *Davideis* we have all the *Heroe* at the first: in the Proposition, he is the *best Poet*, and the *best King*; now, all the Author could do afterwards, is onely to make good his word, and make us conceive of his *Heroe* the same *Idea* at the end of the Poem, which was given us in the beginning; whereas *Homer* calls the man he designs to celebrate barely *Achilles, son of Peleus*, and recording his actions, leaves others to conclude from them what a great *Captain, Prince* and *Heroe* this *Achilles* was.

*Tasso* left the *Episode* of *Sophonia* out of his Poem, because it was *Troppo Lyrico*. Yet Mr. *Cowley* is not content to mix *matters* that are purely *lyrical* in this *Heroick* Poem, but employs the *measures* also.

Yet, notwithstanding what has been said, we cannot now approve the reason (which Sir *Philip Sidney* gives) why Poets are less esteem'd in *England*, than in the other famous Nations, to be *want of merit*: nor be of their opinion, who say, that *Wit* and *Wine* are not of the growth of our Countrey. Valour they allow us; but what we gain by our Arms, we lose by the weakness of our Heads: our good *Ale*, and English *Beef*, they say, may make us *Soldiers*; but are no very good Friends to *Speculation*. Were it proper here to handle this Argument, and to make comparisons with our Neighbors, it might easily, by our *Poetry*, be evinc'd, that our *Wit* was never inferior to theirs, though, perhaps, our *honesty* made us worse Politicians. Wit and Valor have alwayes gone together, and *Poetry* been



the companion of Camps. The *Heroe* and *Poet* were inspired with the same Enthusiasm, acted with the same heat, and both were crown'd with the same *laurel*. Had our Tongue been as generally known, and those who felt our blows, understood our Language; they would confess that our Poets had likewise done their part, and that our Pens had been as successful as our Swords. And certainly if Sir *Philip Sidney* had seen the Poets who succeeded him, he would not have judg'd the *English* less deserving than their Neighbors. In the *Davideis* (fragment and imperfect as it is) there shines something of a more fine, more free, more new, and more noble *air*, than appears in the *Hierusalem* of *Tasso*, which for all his care, is scarce perfectly purg'd from *Pedantry*. But in the *Lyrick* way however, *Cowley* far exceeds him, and all the rest of the *Italians*: though *Lyrick Poesie* is their principal glory, and Pope *Urban VIII*, had the honour a little before him to enrich modern *Poesie* with the *Pindarick* strains. Many the greatest Wits of *France* have attempted the *Epick*, but their performance answer'd not expectation; our fragments are more worth than their finish'd pieces. And though, perhaps, want of encouragement has hinder'd our labours in the *Epic*, yet for the *Drama*, the World has nothing to be compared with us. But a debate of this importance is not the work of a Preface: I shall only here on the behalf of our *English Poetry*, give one single instance, and leave the Reader to judge of *Hercules* by his *foot*.

Amongst the common places (by which *Scaliger*, and before him *Macrobius*, *Agellius*, and the other Criticks have compared the Poets, and examin'd their worth) none has been more generally, and more happily handled, and in none have the Noblest wits both *ancient* and *modern* more contended with each other for victory, than in the *description of the night*. Yet in this the *English* has the advantage, and has even outdone them where they have outdone themselves. The first, I meet with, who had the *lucky hit*, is *Apolonius* in his *Argonautiques*.

Νῦξ μὲν ἔπειτ' ἐπὶ γαῖαν ἄγειν κνέφας, οἱ δ' ἐνὶ πόντῳ  
 Ναῦται εἰς ἐλίκην τε καὶ ἀστέρας ὠρίωνος  
 Ἔδρακον ἐκ νηῶν, ὕπνοιο δὲ καὶ τις ὁδίτης  
 Ἦδη καὶ πυλαωρὸς ἐέλδετο, καὶ τινα παίδων

Μητέρα τεθνεώτων ἀδινὸν περὶ κῶμ' ἐκάλυπτεν.  
 Οὐδὲ κυνῶν ὕλακῇ ἔτ' ἀνὰ πτόλιν, οὐ θρόος ἦεν  
 Ἥχῃεις, σιγῇ δὲ μελαινομένην ἔχεν ὄρφνην.  
 Ἀλλὰ μάλ' οὐ μήδειαν ἐπὶ γλυκερὸς λάβεν ὕπνος.

Here we have variety of matter, yet rather *many*, than *choice* thoughts. He gives us the face of things both by Land and Sea, City and Countrey, the Mariner, the Traveller, the Door-keeper, the Mistress of the Family, her Child and Dog; but loses himself amongst his particulars, and seems to forget for what occasion he mentions them. He would say that all the world is fast asleep but onely *Medea*; and then his Mariners, who are gazing from their ships on *Helice* and *Orion*, can serve but little for his purpose; unless they may be supposed to sleep with their eyes open. Neither dares he say that the *Traveller* and *Porter* are yet taking a Nap, but onely that they have a good mind to't. And after all, we find none but the good Woman who has lost her Child (and she is indeed fast) asleep, unless the Dogs may likewise be supposed so, because they had left off barking. And these, methinks, were scarce worthy to be taken notice of in an *Heroick Poem*, except we may believe that in the *old time*, or that in *Greek* they bark Heroically. *Scaliger*, as his manner is, to prefer *Virgil*, calls this description *mean* and *vulgar*. *Virgil* well saw the levity and trifling of the *Greeks*, and from him we may expect something better digested.

*Nox erat, & placidum carpebant fessa soporem  
 Corpora per terras, sylvæque & sæva quierant  
 Æquora, cum Medio volvuntur sydera lapsu:  
 Cum tacet omnis ager, pecudes pictæque volucres  
 Quæque lacus late liquidos, quæque aspera dumis  
 Rura tenent, somno positæ sub nocte silenti  
 Lenibant curas, & corda oblita laborum.* [Æn. 1. 4.]

Against this may be objected, That sleep being of such a soft and gentle nature, that 'tis said to steal upon our senses, the word [*carpebant*] suits but ill with it; this word seeming to imply a force, and might rather express the violence of Robbers, than the slieness of a Thief. Nor can it be pretended that [*sopor*] signifies a kind of violent and snoring sleep, for here we have it *placidum soporem*.

Instead of *Woods* and *Seas*, *Tasso* rather chooses to join *Winds* and *Seas*, as of a nearer relation, and going more naturally together; the Commentators being certainly mistaken, who would have a *Metonymie* in this place. The third Verse I can scarce believe legitimate: the *words* speak nothing but motion, and the *numbers* are so ratling, that nothing can be more repugnant to the general repose and silence which the Poet describes: or, if any Copies might favour the conjecture, I should rather read

——*Cum medio librantur sydera cursu.*

For nothing can be more Poetical, than to suppose the Stars rest (as it were poiz'd) in their Meridian; and this would not only express it to be Midnight, but heighten the Poets design, which by the common reading is absolutely destroy'd. The fifth line seems to bear a doubtful face, and looks not unlike something of equivocation: an ordinary *Grammarian* would seek no further than the *antecedent* [*volucres*] to refer these *relatives* to; and might construe Wild ducks, and Woodcocks, what the Poet intended for *Fish* in the Sea, and the *wild Beasts* of the Forest.

Besides this, I find none amongst the *Latins* that deserves to be brought into comparison. In the *Italian*, *Ariosto* (whose every description is said to be a *master-piece*) in this is not over-fortunate; he is easie and smooth, but produces nothing of his own invention. He only enlarges on a thought of *Virgils*; which yet he leaves without that *turn* which might give it perfection. What I think is more considerable, is this of *Tasso*.

*Era la notte all'hor, ch' alto riposo  
Han l' onde, e i venti, e pareva muto il mondo:  
Gli animai lassi, e quei, che 'l mar ondoso,  
O de' liquidi laghi alberga il fondo,  
E chi si giace in tana, o in mandra ascoso,  
E i pinti augelli ne l' oblio profondo,  
Sotto il silentio de' secreti horrori,  
Sopian gli affanni, e raddolciano i cori.*

*Tasso*, when he reform'd his Poem, could mend nothing in this description, but repeats it entire in his *Hierusalem liberata*, without any alteration. 'Tis well nigh word for word taken out of *Virgil*, and (to give it its due) is a most excellent Translation. He most judi-

ciously leaves out that *Hemstick, volvuntur sydera lapsu*, the place whereof is (perhaps from *Statius*\*) supply'd with *parea muto il mondo*. Yet on the other hand, here seems to be some superfluity of Fish; *those in the Sea, and those at the bottom of the Lakes*, are more by half than *Virgil*, or, perhaps than *Tasso* had occasion for in this place.

But that we may have something *new* from the *Italians* on this Subject, *Marino* has taken care in his *Adonis, Canto 13*.

*Notte era, allhor che dal diurno moto  
Ha requie ogni pensier, tregna ogni duolo,  
L'onde giacean, tacean zefiro, e Noto,  
E cedeva il quadrante a l'horivolo,  
Sopia l'huom la fatica, il pesce il nuoto,  
La fera il Corso, e l'augelletto il volo.  
Aspettando il tornar del novo lume  
Tra l'alge, o tra rami, o su le piume.*

In these we have more of the *fancy*, than of the *judgment*; variety of matter, rather than exquisite sense. *Marino* is perfectly himself throughout; the *thoughts diurnal motion*, I fear, will scarce pass for a very pathetical expression, nor will it satisfie, that he makes *Zephyrus* and the *South-wind silent*; if he particularize these, he should also name the rest, otherwise the *East-wind* and *Boreas* have leave to bluster. But, above all, he tells us that the *Clocks* have got the better of the *Sun-dials*. A thought purely New, and strangely Heroick. What could come more sudden or surprising? in the latter part of the *Stanza*, we have some strokes of *Ariosto*, but far more lame and imperfect than the original. Neither ought he in this place to speak of any expecting the return of the light; *omnia noctis erant*.

But I hasten to the *French*, amongst whom none more eminent than *Chapelain*, nor was ever a Poem of greater expectation. His description is thus:

*Cependant la nuit vole, & sous son aile obscure  
Invite a sommeiller l'agissante Nature.  
Dans les plaines des airs tient les vents en repose,  
Et sur les champs sales fait reposer les flots,*

\* *Achilleidos* 1. 1. mutumq; amplectitur orbem.

*A tout ce qui se meut, a tout ce qui respire  
 Dans les pres, dans les bois le repos elle inspire,  
 Elle suspend par tout les travaux & les bruits,  
 Et par tout dans les cœurs assoupit les ennuis.  
 Charles seul esveille——*

This description is perfect *French*. There is scarce any coming at a little sense, 'tis so encompassed about with words. What *Virgil* or *Tasso* would have dispatch'd in half a Verse, here fills out the measures of two whole *Alexandrins*.

Some Caviller would object, That since the *Night flies*, there is little sleep to be got under *her wing*, unless for such as can walk in their sleep. And that the *Night* might have spared this *invitation*, seeing those she *invites* are asleep already: *Charles alone is awake*, and for that reason, was the onely thing fit to be invited; and doubtless the *Night* was as free of her *invitation* to him, as to any others, 'twas his fault that he had no stomach to 't. And here is much power given to the *Night*, which she has no claim or title to: 'tis not the *Night* that makes the *Waves and Winds*, and all the things that *move and breath in Meads and Woods* to *repose*. She onely invites them to sleep, and it is sleep that makes them rest. In the space of four lines, we meet with *repos*, *reposer*, *repos*, which argue the language very barren, or else the Poet extremely negligent, and a lover of repose. He tells us, that the *Night inspires repose*. But certainly motion is a more likely thing to be inspired, than rest, as more properly the effect of breath.

But without examining this further, let us try if *Le Moyne* (whom our Critick prefers before all others of the *French Epick Poets*) be more fortunate.

*Cependant le soleil se couche dans son lit,  
 Que luymesme de pourpre & de laque embellit:  
 Et la nuit qui survient aussi triste que sombre,  
 De toutes les couleurs ne fait que une grand'ombre;  
 Aveque le sommeil le silence la suit,  
 L'un amy du repos, l'autre ennemy du bruit:  
 Et quoique sous leur pas la tempeste se taise,  
 Quoique le vent s'endorme & que l'onde s'appaise:*

[St. Louys.]

Here again are words in abundance. He cannot tell us that 'tis Midnight, till he first have informed us that *the Sun is gone to Bed*, to a fine Bed of *his own trimming*: and this is matter enough for the first two Verses. Then we are told, that the *Night of all Colours makes but one great shade*, and this suffices for the second *Couplet*. *Aussi triste que sombre*, is an expression the *French* are so delighted with, they can scarce name any thing of Night without it. The third *Couplet* is much-what as in a *Bill of Fare*:

*Item—Beef and Mustard,  
That Friend to th' Stomach, this a Foe to th' Nose.*

The second line in both being alike impertinent.

Any further *Reflections*, or more examples would be superfluous. What has been noted, rather concerns the Niceties of *Poetry*, than any the little trifles of *Grammar*. We have seen what the noblest Wits both ancient and modern, have done in other Languages, and observ'd that in their very Master-pieces they sometimes trip, or are however liable to Cavils. It now remains that our *English* be expos'd to the like impartial Censure.

*All things are hush'd, as Nature's self lay dead,  
The Mountains seem to Nod their drowsie head,  
The little Birds in dreams their Songs repeat,  
And sleeping flowers beneath the Night-dew sweat,  
Even Lust and Envy sleep. [In the Conquest of Mexico.]*

In this description, four lines yield greater variety of matter, and more choice thoughts than twice the number of any other Language. Here is something more *fortunate* than the boldest fancy has yet reached, and something more *just*, than the severest reason has observed. Here are the *flights* of *Statius* and *Marino* temper'd with a more discerning judgment, and the *judgment* of *Virgil* and *Tasso* animated with a more sprightly Wit. Nothing has been said so expressive and so home in any other Language as the first Verse in this description. The second is *Statius* improv'd.

*Et simulant fessos curvata cacumina somnos.*

Saith *Statius*, where *simulant* is a bold word in comparison of our *English* word *seem*, being of an active signification; and *cacumina*



may as well be taken for the tops of Trees, as the tops of Mountains, which doubtful meaning does not so well content the Reader, as the certainty.

In the *third* Verse, 'tis not said that the Birds sleep, but what is more new, and more Poetical, their sleep is imply'd, by their dreams. Somewhat like the *Fourth* we have in *Marino*.

———*E languidetti i fiori*

*Giaceano a l' herba genitrice in seno.*

[Adonis Canto 20.]

Which is a pretty image, but has not so near a resemblance with truth, nor can so generally be apply'd to all flowers. Our Author here dares not say directly that the flowers sleep, which might sound a little harsh, but slurs it over in the *participle*, as taken for granted, and affirms only that they *sweat*, which the *Night-dew* makes very easie.

In the last Half-verse, we may see how far our Author has out-done *Apollonius*. 'Twas no such strange thing in the sorrowful Woman when she had spent her tears, for sleep to close her eyes: but here we have the most raging and watchful passions *Lust* and *Envy*. And these too instead of the lustful and the envious, for the greater force and emphasis, in the *abstract*.

Some may object, That the *third* Verse does contradict the *first*. How can *all things be hush'd*, if *Birds in dreams repeat their Songs*? Is not this like the indiscretion of *Marino*, who says, *That the Winds and all things are husht, and the Seas so fast asleep, that they snore*. [Canto 20.]

It may be answer'd, That in this place 'tis not the Poet that speaks, but another person; and that the Poet here truly represents the nature of man, whose first thoughts break out in bold and more general terms, which by the second thoughts are more correct and limited. As if one should say, all things are silent, or asleep however; if there is any noise, 'tis still but the effect of sleep, as the dreams of Birds, &c. This comparison might be much further improved to our advantage, and more observations made, which are left to the Readers ingenuity.

THE TRAGEDIES OF THE LAST AGE  
CONSIDER'D AND EXAMIN'D BY  
THE PRACTICE OF THE ANCIENTS,  
AND BY THE COMMON SENSE OF  
ALL AGES, IN A LETTER TO  
FLEETWOOD SHEPHEARD, Esq.

HAVING several mornings, and early, travell'd to St. *James's*, with the only design of being with you; and missing you as often; I became so mortifi'd with the misfortune, that I resolv'd to come into the Town no more, till assur'd of your return from *Copt-Hall*: but because I meant not altogether to kill my self, for my entertainment I provided me some of those *Master pieces* of Wit, so renown'd every-where, and so edifying to the *Stage*: I mean the choicest and most applauded *English Tragedies* of this last age; as *Rollo*; *A King and no King*; the *Maids Tragedy* by *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*: *Othello*, and *Julius Cæsar*, by *Shakespear*; and *Cataline* by *Worthy Ben*.

These I perus'd with some attention, and some reflections I made; in which, how far I mistake your sense, that is, how far I am mistaken, I desire to be inform'd.

I had heard that the *Theater* was wont to be call'd the *School of Vertue*; and *Tragedy* a *Poem* for *Kings*: That they who first brought Tragedy to perfection, were made *Vice-Roys* and *Governors of Islands*; were honoured every-where with *Statues of Marble*, and *Statues of Brass*; were stil'd the *Wise Sophocles*, the *Wise Euripides* by God and Man, by *Oracles* and *Philosophers*. That for teaching *Morality*, *Crantor* and *Chrysippus* were no-body to 'em. This latter

transcrib'd the whole *Medea* of *Euripides* into his works. That so refin'd a People, and so frugal a *Common-wealth* as *Athens* did tax and assess themselves, and laid out more of their publick Exchequer upon the representation of these Plays, than all their Wars stood them in, though sometimes both Seas and Land were cover'd with Pagan Enemies that invaded them. And not *Athens* only, but (who hated *Athens*) so austere and glum a generation as those of *Sparta*, by the care of *Lycurgus*, agreed the same honour to these *Athenian Poets*.

These things coming into my mind, surely (thought I) mens brains lye not in the same place as formerly; or else Poetry is not now the same thing it was in those days of yore.

I therefore made enquiry what *difference* might be in our *Philosophy* and *Manners*; I found that our *Philosophers* agreed well enough with theirs, in the *main*; however, that our Poets have forc'd another way to the *wood*; a *by-road*, that runs directly cross to that of *Nature*, *Manners* and *Philosophy* which gain'd the *Ancients* so great veneration.

I would not examin the *proportions*, the *unities* and *outward regularities*, the *mechanical part* of Tragedies: there is no talking of Beauties when there wants Essentials; 'tis not necessary for a man to have a nose on his face, nor to have two legs: he may be a *true* man, though aukward and unsightly, as the *Monster* in the *Tempest*.

Nor have I much troubl'd their phrase and expression, I have not vex'd their language with the *doubts*, the *remarks* and eternal triflings of the *French Grammaticasters*: much less have I cast about for Jests, and gone a quibble-catching.

I have chiefly consider'd the *Fable* or *Plot*, which all conclude to be the *Soul* of a *Tragedy*; which, with the *Ancients*, is always found to be a *reasonable Soul*; but *with us*, for the most part, a *brutish*, and often worse than *brutish*.

And certainly there is not requir'd much Learning, or that a man must be some *Aristotle*, and *Doctor* of *Subtilties*, to form a right judgment in this particular; common sense suffices; and rarely have I known the *Women-judges* mistake in these points, when they have the patience to think, and (left to their own heads) they decide with their own sense. But if people are prepossest, if they will judg of *Rollo* by *Othello*, and one *crooked line* by another, we can never have a certainty.

Amongst those who will be objecting against the doctrin I lay down, may peradventure appear a sort of men who have remem-ber'd *so* and *so*; and value themselves upon their *experience*. I may write by the *Book* (say they) what I have a mind, but they *know* what will *please*. These are a kind of *Stage-quacks* and *Empericks* in Poetry, who have got a *Receit* to *please*: And no *Collegiate* like 'em for *purging* the Passions.

These say (for instance) a *King* and no *King*, *pleases*. I say the *Comical* part *pleases*.

I say that Mr. *Hart* *pleases*; most of the business falls to his share, and what he *delivers*, every one takes upon *content*; their eyes are prepossest and charm'd by his *action*, before ought of the *Poets* can approach their *ears*; and to the most wretched of *Characters*, he gives a lustre and *brillant* which dazles the *sight*, that the *deformities* in the Poetry cannot be perceiv'd.

Therefore a distinction is to be made between what *pleases naturally* in it self, and what *pleases* upon the account of *Machines*, *Actors*, *Dances* and circumstances which are meerly *accidental* to the *Tragedy*.

*Aristotle* observes, that in his time, some who (wanting the talent to *write* what might *please*) made it their care that the *Actors* should help out, where the *Muses* faild.

These objectors urge, that there is also another great *accident*, which is, that *Athens* and *London* have not the same *Meridian*.

Certain it is, that *Nature* is the same, and *Man* is the same, he *loves*, *grieves*, *hates*, *envies*, has the same *affections* and *passions* in both places, and the same *springs* that give them *motion*. What mov'd *pity* there, will *here* also produce the same effect.

This must be confest, unless they will, in effect say, that we have not that *delicate tast* of things; we are not so *refin'd*, nor so *vertuous*; that *Athens* was more *civiliz'd* by their *Philosophers*, than we with both our *Philosophers* and *twelve Apostles*.

But were it to be suppos'd that *Nature* with us is a *corrupt* and deprav'd *Nature*, that we are *Barbarians*, and *humanity* dwells not amongst us; shall our *Poet* therefore pamper this *corrupt* nature, and indulge our barbarity? Shall he not rather *purge* away the corruption, and reform our *manners*? Shall he not with *Orpheus* rather choose to draw the *Brutes* after him, than be himself a *follower* of the *Herd*? Was it thus that the *ancient* Poets (by the best Philoso-

phers) became stil'd the *Fathers* of Knowledg, and *Interpreters* of the Gods?

Lastly, (though *Tragedy* is a Poem chiefly for *men of sense*,) yet I cannot be perswaded that the people are so very mad of *Acorns*, but that they could be well content to eat the *Bread* of civil persons.

Say others, *Poetry* and *Reason*, how come these to be Cater-cousins? Poetry is the *Child* of *Fancy*, and is never to be school'd and *disciplin'd* by *Reason*; Poetry, say they, is *blind* inspiration, is pure *enthusiasm*, is *rapture* and *rage* all over.

But *Fancy*, I think, in Poetry, is like *Faith* in Religion; it makes far discoveries, and soars above reason, but never clashes, or runs against it. *Fancy* leaps, and frisks, and away she's gone; whilst *reason* rattles the chains, and follows after. *Reason* must consent and ratify what-ever by *fancy* is attempted in its absence; or else 'tis all *null* and void in law. However, in the contrivance and *æconomy* of a Play, *reason* is always principally to be consulted. Those who object against reason, are the *Fanaticks* in Poetry, and are never to be sav'd by their good works.

Others imagin that these rules and restraints on the *Plot* and *Argument* of Tragedy, wou'd hinder much good *intrigue*, wou'd clog invention, and make all *Plays* alike and *uniform*.

But certainly *Nature* affords plenty and variety enough of *Beauties*, that no man need complain if the *deform'd* are cloyster'd up, and shut from him. Such a Painter has been, who could draw nothing but a *Rose*; yet other Painters can design one and the same good face in a thousand several figures: it may be remember'd that there are but five vowels; or be consider'd, from *seven* Planets, and their several positions, how *many fates* and fortunes the *Astrologer* distributes to the people. And has not a Poet more *vertues* and *vices* within his *circle*, cannot he observe them and their influences in their several *situations*, in their *oppositions* and *conjunctions*, in their *altitudes* and *depressions*: and he shall sooner find his *ink*, than the *stores* of Nature exhausted.

Other objections may be answer'd as they fall in the way. I would only have you before hand advertiz'd, that you will find me ty'd to no certain *stile*, nor laying my reasons together in *form* and *method*. You will find me sometimes reasoning, sometimes declaim-

ing, sometimes citing authority for common sense; sometimes *uttering*, as my *own*, what may be had at any *Bookshop* in the Nation: sometimes doubting when I might be positive, and sometimes confident out of season; sometimes turning *Tragedy* into what is *light* and comical, and sporting when I should be serious. This variety made the travel more easy. And you know I am not cut out for writing a *Treatise*, nor have a *genius* to *pen* any thing *exactly*; so long as I am *true* to the *main sense* before me, you will pardon me in the rest.

Nor will it, I hope, give offence that I handle these *Tragedies* with the same liberty that I formerly had taken in examining the *Epick Poems* of *Spencer*, *Cowley*, and such names as will ever be *sacred* to me. *Rapin* tells us, for his own *Countreymen*, that none of them had writ a good *Tragedy*, nor was ever like to write one. And an \**eminent Italian* confesses, that the best of theirs exceeded not a mediocrity; and yet their *Divine Tasso* had then writ a *Tragedy*, and *Torrismondo* strutted it in *buskins*.

But I have elsewhere declar'd my opinion, that the *English* want neither *genius* nor *language* for so great a work. And, certainly, had our Authors began with *Tragedy*, as *Sophocles* and *Euripides* left it; had they either built on the same foundation, or after their *model*; we might e're this day have seen Poetry in greater perfection, and boasted such *Monuments* of wit as *Greece* or *Rome* never knew in all their *glory*.

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According to the best account I can gather from old Authors.

*Tragedy* was originally, with the Ancients, a piece of *Religious* worship, a part of their *Liturgy*. The Priests sung an Anthem to their god *Dionysus*, whilst the *Goat*† stood at his Altar to be *sacrific'd*: And this was call'd the *Goat-song* or *Tragedy*.

These Priests were call'd the *Chorus*, and now the whole Cere-

\* *O sia stata la loro poca fortuna, ò l'imperfezione della nostra lingua nelle cose gravi.* A. Tassone.

† *Would therefore read in* Horace, *Vilem certavit ad hircum*, as—*Rhetor dicturus ad aras*; not being satisfied in *Antiquity* with what the *Commentators* devise, when they read,—*Vilem certavit ob hircum*.



mony was perform'd by them, till *Thespis* introduc'd the *Episode*, and brought an *Actor* on the Stage.

Which *Episode* the Priests at first mutini'd against as an *Innovation*, they listen'd a long while, thought it ran off from the Text, and wonder'd how it wou'd be appli'd, till at last their patience could hold no longer, and they roar'd out, \**Nothing to Dionysus, nothing to Dionysus*, which gave beginning to the Proverb.

But the *Poet* gaining upon them by little and little, enlarged the *Episod*, till it grew the *main part*; the *part* which only is by us call'd the *Tragedy*. And to make amends to *Dionysus*, the *Theaters* were all consecrated to him, and the Plays acted *there*, call'd *Dionysus's Plays*.

After much new-modelling, many changes and alterations, *Æschylus* came with a *second Actor* on the Stage, and lessen'd the business of the *Chorus* proportionably. But *Sophocles* adding a *third Actor*, and *painted Scenes*, gave (in *Aristotle's* opinion,) the utmost *perfection* to *Tragedy*.

And now it was that (the *men* of *sense* grown weary with discoursing of *Atoms* and *empty Space*, and the *humour* of *Mechanical Philosophy* near spent.) *Socrates* set up for *Morality*, and all the buz in *Athens* was now about vertue and good life.

*Camerades* with him, and *Confederates* in his worthy design, were our *Sophocles* and *Euripides*: But these took a different method.

He instructed in a pleasant facetious manner, by witty *questions*, *allusions* and *parables*.

These were for teaching by *examples*, in a graver way, yet extremely *pleasant* and *delightful*. And, finding in History, the same *end* happen to the *righteous* and to the *unjust*, *vertue* often opprest, and *wickedness* on the Throne: they saw these particular *yesterday-truths* were imperfect and improper to illustrate the *universal* and *eternal truths* by them intended. Finding also that this *unequal* distribution of rewards and punishments did perplex the *wisest*, and by the *Atheist* was made a scandal to the *Divine Providence*. They concluded, that a *Poet* must of necessity see *justice* exactly administered, if he intended to please. For, said they, if the World can scarce be satisfi'd with God Almighty, whose holy will and purposes are

\* οὐδὲν Πρὸς διόνυσον.

not to be *comprehended*; a *Poet* (in these matters) shall never be pardon'd, who (they are sure) is not *incomprehensible*; whose *ways* and *walks* may, without *impiety*, be penetrated and examin'd. They knew indeed, that many things naturally unpleasant to the World in *themselves*, yet gave *delight* when well *imitated*.\* These they consider'd as the picture of some *deform'd* old Woman; that might cause *laughter*, or some light, superficial, and *comical* pleasure; but never to be endur'd on serious occasions, where the attention of the mind, and where the heart was engaged.

We have pictures that yield another sort of pleasure, as the *last Judgment*, of *Mich. Angelo*, the *Massacre* of the *Innocents*, the *Baptist's* head, &c.

'Tis true; but if they yield any pleasure besides what proceeds from the art, and what rests in eye. 'Tis by the History, to which the picture serves only as an *Index*.

For till our memory goes back to the History, the *head* of the *Baptist* can say no more to us, than the *head* of *Goliah*. But the Ancients in their Tragedies rested not on History.

They found that *History*, grosly taken, was neither proper to *instruct*, nor apt to *please*; and therefore they would not trust History for their examples, but refin'd upon the History; and thence contriv'd something †more *philosophical*, and more *accurate* than *History*. But whether our *English* Authors of Tragedy lay their foundation so deep, whether they had any *design* in their *designs*, and whether it was to *prudence* or to *chance* that they sacrific'd, is the business of this present enquiry.

We have in *Herodian* the horrid and bloody story of the two Brothers, *Antoninus* and *Geta*, Emperors, all which (*crude* and undigested, as in the *Original*) we find cram'd into

## THE TRAGEDY OF ROLLO DUKE OF NORMANDY

No reason, I presume, can be given, why, having found an *History*, this Author should change the names; of *Antoninus* and *Geta* into *Rollo* and *Otto*; Emperors of Rome, into *Dukes* of *Normandy*. Nor why he alter'd the *Scene* to bring these Cut-throats and *Poi-*

\* Aristotle, *Poet*.

† Σπουδαιότερον καὶ φιλοσόφικότερον.

soners from the other side of the *Alps*. *Aristotle* tells it as extraordinary, of a *Tragedy* made by *Polemon*; wherein both the *names* and *matter* were of his own *invention*; and yet it had the fortune to *please*. He also reminds us that a man is better *pleas'd* with the *picture* of an *acquaintance*, than of a person of whom we had never *heard*. And we generally observe, when one tells of an *adventure*, or but a *jeast*, he will choose to father it on some one that is *known*, thereby to get attention, and gain more credit to what he relates. Besides, many things are *probable* of *Antoninus*, or of *Alexander*, and *particular* men, because they are *true*, which cannot be *generally probable*: and he that will be *feigning* persons, should confine his fancy to *general probability*.

#### THE FABLE IS THIS:

*Rollo* and *Otto* Brothers, and both equally (let me call them) Kings of one and the same Kingdom, cannot agree about the matter. *Rollo* (by the means of his favourite *Latorch*) attempts to poison his Brother; which failing, he kills *Otto* in the arms of their Mother *Sophia*, with Sword drawn offers to kill his Mother and Sister *Mat*. but is disarm'd by *Aubrey*, yet sends out Lord Chancellor *Gisbert* to be chopt in two, and thrown to the dogs; and his Tutor *Baldwin* also to be beheaded. *Hamond*, Captain of the Guards, saw all this executed. *Allan*, the Captain's Brother gives (his *quondam*-Master) the Chancellor, Christian Burial: for which, he is sent to pot. *Edith*, *Baldwin*'s Daughter, beseeches the King to spare her Father; prevails, but too late. *Rollo* is in love with her; she resolves his death. *Hamond*, in revenge of his Brother *Allan*, stabs, and is stab'd by *Rollo*, whose Sister *Matilda*, *Aubrey* takes to Wife, and Reigns in his stead.

Now, if you call this a Fable; give me one of old *Æsop*'s; where, for all the coarse out-side, there dwells a little *reasonable Soul* within, a little *good Sense* at the bottom, which carries it through all Nations, and will commend it to the end of the World.

For nothing certainly is design'd in this of *Rollo*, either to move *pitty* or *terror*, either to *delight* or *instruct*.

It is indeed a History, and it may well be a History; for never man of common *sense* could set himself to invent any thing so gross.

Poetry requires the *ben trovato*, something *handsomely invented*, and leaves the *truth* to History; but never were the Muses profan'd with a more foul, unpleasant, and unwholsome *truth*, than this which makes the Argument of *Rollo*.

If the *end* of this *Tragedy* is the Marriage and Coronation of *Aubrey*, had one of the ancient Poets been to cultivate this History; They would have laid the right of the Crown in *Aubrey*. They would have given us to understand, that *Aubrey's* Father, a good King, rais'd *Rollo's* Father from a mean condition to be his favourite, and have the places of greatest trust and confidence with him. This ungrateful Villain most treacherously murders the King his Master, settles himself on his Throne, dies in Peace, leaves the Kingdom equally to his two Sons. These Sons enter upon the Government, the people swear Allegiance to 'em, Complement them with Addresses from all Countreys; the Air rings with *Vive-le-Roy's* and Acclamations. The Sun shines as it was wont, the Grass grows, Cows give white Milk, and no *Ægyptian* Plague troubles the Land. Heaven has forgot, and human means appear none, for either revenging the murder'd King, or restoring his Son *Aubrey*.

Now is the time for a Poet to shew his cunning. Now he must bring a sudden and terrible judgment to destroy the *Rollian-Race*, and set young *Aubrey* on the Throne of his Ancestors.

To effect this, the two Brothers must be made to kill each other; and, as a consequence of this disaster, their Mother is to kill her self for sorrow.

These Brothers, in their character, would have been harmless men, modest enough, and loving each other tenderly: for had they been wicked, the judgment upon them might be apply'd as due to their own crimes. Or however their Fathers crime in it self would have appear'd less, as not enough alone to deserve that vengeance; and if the occasion was not clear, the punishment would be less regarded; but their innocence makes the punishment more signal and extraordinary, and more discovers the work of Heaven. And thus also they are capable of moving pitty, when only their Father's crime pursues them; and it seems likely that, otherwise, they might have liv'd happily together.

Their Sister *Matilda* must have been a vertuous sweet Lady, every way of singular merit, sensible of her Father's crime, and of

the wrong that *Aubrey* suffers. By this character, all those who had *pittied* her Brothers, would have been extremely satisfi'd to see their Sister so well preferr'd in the Marriage with *Aubrey*; for Heaven, by this, would seem, in her, to make some amends for the hard measure to the unfortunate Brothers.

*Aubrey* should in all his words and actions appear great, promising, and Kingly, to deserve that care which Heaven manifests so wonderfully in his Restoration.

And because this, of the two Brothers killing each other, is an action *morally* unnatural; therefore, by way of *preparation*, the *Tragedy* would have begun with Heaven and Earth in disorder, *nature* troubl'd, unheard-of *prodigies*; something (if I may so say) *physically* unnatural, and against the ordinary course of nature. Perhaps the first *Scene* would have shew'd the Usurper's *Ghost* from Hell, full of horror for his crime, cursing his Sons, and sending some infernal *fury* amongst them.

And, by the way, he might relate all things fit to be known, which past out of the *Drama*.

The nicety in writing upon this *Fable*, would have chiefly been in the *characters* of the two Brothers, These are the persons kill'd, and, of all things, a Poet must be tender of a mans life, and never *sacrifice* it to his *Maggot* and *Capriccio*. Therefore, as (I said) the Brothers were not to be *wicked*, so likewise they ought not to be absolutely innocent. For if they had refused to succeed their Father, and when they might have sat on the Throne, have humbled themselves at *Aubrey's* feet; then no *Poetical Justice* could have touch'd them: guilty they were to be, in enjoying their Father's crime; but not of committing any new. And this guilt of theirs was also either to be palliated, or else to be past over in silence, lest, laid too open, the compassion of the Audience might be abated. Neither would it suffice that these Brothers kill each other by some chance; but it should appear, that agitated by their Father's crime, like *Machines*, they unavoidably clash against each other; whilst their proper *inclination* in vain strives against the *violence*.

If the *English Theatre* requires more *intrigue*, an Author may multiply the *Incidents*, may add *Episods*, and *thicken* the *Plot*, as he sees occasion; provided that all the *lines* tend to the same *center*: more of a main *Plot*, *Virgil* requir'd not for his *Epic Poem*.

And peradventure, if the Poet design any certain *sense* by his *Fable*, that sense will bind him to the *unity* of *action*; and the *unity* of *action* cannot well exceed the rule for *time*. And these two *unities* will not permit that the Poet can far transgress in the *third*. So that all the *regularities* seem in a manner to be link'd together: but begin with an absurdity, and nothing reasonable can ever follow. If a Pilot puts to Sea without resolving for what Port, none can wonder that he sails not by the *Compass*.

To return to this *Tragedy* of *Rollo*, if the stress of the design rests not on *Aubrey*; but the sense of all *terminates* in *Rollo*. The sense must be this; *He that sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed*. And if this be all, where's the Wonder? Have we not every day cried in the Streets, instances of God's *revenge* against *murder*, more extraordinary, and more poetical than all this comes to? If this be Poetry, *Tyburn* is a better and more ingenious *School* of *Vertue*, than the *Theatre*.

In former times *Poetry* was another thing than *History*, or than the *Law* of the Land. *Poetry* discover'd crimes, the *Law* could never find out; and punish'd those the *Law* had acquitted. The *Areopagus* clear'd *Orestes*, but with what *Furies* did the *Poets* haunt and torment him? and what a wretch made they of *Oedipus*, when the *Casulist* excus'd his *invincible* ignorance?

The *Poets* consider'd, that naturally men were affected with *pitty*, when they saw others suffer more than their fault deserv'd; and *vice*, they thought, could never be painted too ugly and frightful; therefore, whether they would move *pitty*, or make *vice* detested, it concern'd them to be somewhat of the severest in the punishments they inflicted. Now, because their hands were tied, that they could not punish beyond such a degree; they were oblig'd to have a strict eye on their Malefactor, that he transgress not too far, that he committed not *two* crimes, when but responsible for *one*: nor, indeed, be so far guilty, as by the *Law* to deserve death. For though *historical Justice* might rest there; yet *poetical Justice* could not be so content. It would require that the satisfaction be compleat and full, e're the *Malefactor* goes off the *Stage*, and nothing left to God Almighty, and another World. Nor will it suffer that the Spectators trust the *Poet* for a *Hell* behind the *Scenes*; the fire must roar in the conscience of the *Criminal*, the *fiends* and *furies* be conjur'd up to



their faces, with a world of *machine* and horrid spectacles; and yet the *Criminal* could never move *pitty*. Therefore amongst the *Ancients* we find no Malefactors of this kind; a wilful Murderer is with them as strange and unknown, as a *Paricide* to the old *Romans*. Yet need we not fancy that they were squeamish, or unacquainted with any of these great *lumping* crimes in that age; when we remember their *Oedipus*, *Orestes*, or *Medea*. But they took care to wash the Viper, to cleanse away the venom, and with such art to prepare the morsel: they made it all Junket to the tast, and all Physick in the operation.

They so qualifi'd, so allaid, and cover'd the *crime* with circumstances, that little could appear on the *Stage*, but either the causes and provocations before it, or the remorse and penitence, the despairs and horrors of conscience which follow'd, to make the *Criminal* every way a fit object for *pitty*. Nor can we imagin their *Stage* so rarely endur'd any bloodshed, and that the sight was displeasing, because the Spectators were some sort of effeminate, unfighting fellows. When we remember the Battels of *Marathon* and *Salamis*; and with what small number these very Spectators had routed *Xerxes* and the greatest Armies in the World. For now it was that the *arms* of the *Athenians* (as well as their *arts*) shin'd in their greatest glory.

The truth is, the *Poets* were to move *pitty*; and this *pitty* was to be mov'd for the living, who remain'd; and not for the dead. And they found in nature, than men could not so easily pardon a crime committed before their faces; and consequently could not be so easily dispos'd to bestow that *pitty* on the *Criminal* which the Poets labour'd for. The Poets, I say, found that the sight of the fact made so strong an impression, as no art of theirs could afterwards fully conquer.

But leave reasoning, and return to *Rollo*; it seems very odd to see the first four *Scenes* pass as if nothing extraordinary were towards, without any preparation; and immediately, without more ado, the two Brothers, two Kings, are a fighting. The *Ancients* would have made the Earth tremble, and the Sun start out of the Firmament at a sight so unnatural. Yet we make no more of them, but turn them out, like two Cocks of the Game, for the diversion of the Rabble.

Some have remark'd, that *Athens* being a *Democracy*, the Poets, in favour of their Government, expos'd Kings, and made them un-

fortunate. But certainly, examin the Kings of their *Tragedies*, they appear all *Heroes*, and ours but *Dogs*, in comparison of them. So respectful they seem to Kings in their *Democracy*, and so unthinking and unpolitick are our *Poets* under a *Monarchy*. *Thebes* was always enemy to *Athens*, yet would not any *National* pique, nor other, provoke the Poets to treat those Kings unhandsomly; because by their rules to have lessen'd the Kings, would have made their *Tragedies* of no effect, in moving the pitty intended by them. They made the Kings *unfortunate*, we make them *wicked*: they made them to be *pittied*, we make them to be *curs*t and *abhor*r'd.

That I may, in all hitherto laid down, be the better understood, let it be observ'd what measures *Euripides* took in the Tragedy of *Etheocles* and *Polynices*.

This instance I choose, the condition of those *Theban* Kings being the neerest to this of *Rollo* and *Otto*: for they also were equally Kings, could not agree, kill'd each other. That we might not suspect that the dissention between them rose from any malice of their own, we are let to know, that the Gods owe a vengeance to *Thebes*, which is now ripe, and ready to fall upon them, for a crime of their Founder *Cadmus*.

That their Grandfather *Laius* warn'd by the *Oracle* not to marry, his Marriage had so incens'd the Gods, that now they were punishing his disobedience on the third generation.

That their Father *Oedipus* had curs't them, and praid they might dye by each others hands.

These Brothers, to avoid their Father's *curse*, agree, not to live together, but to Reign by the year alternately, and each to be King in his turn. According to this agreement, the younger Brother goes into banishment, where he marries, makes Allies of some *hot-headed* Princes, as *Tydeus*, *Capaneus*, and five more, and brings a Confederate Army before *Thebes*. The Brothers have an interview; *Polynices* demands his *turn*; *Etheocles* answers to this effect.

Now, whilst I may continue a King, I cannot willingly yield to become a Servant. Neither take you a right course, coming with force of Arms, and laying the Countrey wast. *Thebes* would blush, should I resign my Scepter for fear of the Mycenæan spears. In fine, Brother, if I am to transgress, for a Kingdom I would transgress; in all the rest \*serve God.

This haughty speech of *Etheocles* turns all the current of pitty to his Brother's side. Now the Confederates fall on to storm the Town, are repuls'd, with great slaughter on both sides. *Etheocles*, notwithstanding he was the King in possession, notwithstanding he knew (by *Tyresias* the Prophet) that the *Thebans* would be victorious, and notwithstanding the danger of his Father's curse; yet out of his generosity and humanity to save the effusion of innocent blood; offers the single Combat with his Brother; which accepted, both are kill'd, and dye friends. *Etheocles* could not speak, indeed, but his sighs were all tenderness. The last breath of *Polynices* made these words;

\**My friend turn'd enemy, but still my friend.*

But though *Polynices* seems ill treated, and his Brother is much too sharp upon him. The reason given by the *Poet*, is, because he brings forreign Forces to invade his *Native* Countrey: and perhaps the *Poet* on this occasion might somewhat strain his *Philosophy* to gratify the *Politician*, but the *Poet* seems so afraid that the *Audience* should forget that these dissentions are the effect of their Ancestors crimes; and in no wise spring from their own ill mind and election; that he is every where a hinting to us the curse entailed on the Family by their Grandfathers Marriage; the violence of superior powers, of Demons and Furies, which we want language to express,—*ἡ δεινά τις ἔρις Θεός*: or some terrible goddess discord.—*εἴτ' ἔρις, εἴτε πατὴρ ὁ σὸς αἵτιος. εἴτε τὸ δαιμόνιον.*—Whether discord or your Father is the cause, or some ill spirit. *Κάδμου παλαιῶν* suffer for the old pique against *Cadmus*, *νοσεῖ γὰρ ἡδε γῆ*—the land is sick, *ἐκ δ' ἔπνουσ' αὐτοῖς ἄρας δεινὰς*—breath'd terrible curses against them, *ἀρὰς ἀρᾶται παισὶν ἀνοσιωτάτας*, did curse most unhal- lowed curses to his Sons, *τὰς σὰς ἀρὰς δ' ἔοικεν ἐκπλήσειν Θεὸς ἐξ οὗ 'τεκνώθε Λάιος βία Θεῶν*. God is ready to fulfil your curses, because in spight of the gods *Laius* made Children, *ἀρὰς παραλαβὼν Λαῖου καὶ παισι δούς*, handing the curses from *Laius* down to his posterity, —*οὐ γὰρ*—*ἄνευ θεῶν του*,—I was not born such a fool to pull out my own eyes, and curse my Sons, if some of the Gods had not made me mad, says *Oedipus*, *διὰ δὲ τοὺς ἀλάστορας*,—be- cause of your fiends. *ὁ σὸς ἀλάστωρ*,—your fiend is the cause.

\* *ὁ φίλος γὰρ ἐχθρὸς ἐγένετ', ἀλλ' ὅμως φίλος.*

ὄθεν ἐπέσντο τάνδε γὰν ἀρπαγαῖσι δαιμόνων τις ἄτα, some bane sent upon the land by evil spirits, γάμων ἐπακταν ἄταν, the bane fixed to the Marriage of *Laius*, πατὸς οὐ φεύξεσθ' ἐριννύς, not escape their Fathers *Furies*, χάρματ' ἐριννύος, the joy of the *Furies*, ἔνεκεν ἐρινύων, because of the *Furies*, πημονὰν ἐριννύων, the Plague of the *Furies*, στενάζον ἀρὰς τέκνοις, sighing curses against his Sons, καὶ τὸ θεόθεν,——what comes from god, δαιμονοῦντας, haunted with evil spirits θεία προνοία νεικέων ἐπώνυμον, *Polynices* had his name from Contention.

By what I have noted one might think the Poet would have us believe that all the *Furies* in Hell were broke loose and at work to make these two Brothers miserable, and consequently would have us take their part, would engage our affections, and carry our heart along with a sense of their sufferings: Heaven and Earth conspire their ruine.

*Quid meus Æneas in te committere tantum?*

What had they done to deserve this persecution? the curse of their Father lay nearest them, and is most insisted on by the Poet, how had they vexed their Father? their Father transported with the sense of his own horrible misfortunes, tore out his own Eyes, and in that condition would have run about the streets, but these two Sons of his kept him within doors by force, this enrag'd him the more, and he threw his curses about him, which some evil spirits (who haunted the house for some old accounts) gladly lay hold on, and never rested till those curses had their effect.

By what has been observ'd any one may judge whether these *Characters* of *Etheocles* and *Polynices*, or those of *Rollo* and *Otto* be the better contrived for moving that pity which *Tragedy* requires. And I have been the more particular, because not only *Rollo*, but most of the *Characters* in our Tragedies of the last Age, may be examin'd by the same reason. And yet *Eurypides* has been blam'd for making his *Characters* more wicked than they ought to be in *Tragedy*: he was not taxed by *Aristophanes* and *Aristotle* only, but by *Sophocles*, and the general sense of *Athens* was against him. They said, in those days, that Comedy (whose Province was humor and ridiculous matter only) was to represent things worse than the truth. History was to describe the truth, but Tragedy was to invent

things better then the truth. Like good Painters they must design their Images like the Life, but yet better and more beautiful then the Life. The Malefactor of Tragedy must be a better sort of Malefactor then those that live in the present Age. For an obdurate impudent and impenitent Malefactor can neither move compassion nor terror; nor be of any imaginable use in *Tragedy*.

See we then *Rollo*, fighting with his own Brother and King, equal to himself, and attempting to poyson him, without any remorse; killing him in their mothers arms, without any provocation; calling the Queen their Mother *Belldam*, and with drawn sword threatening to kill both her and his Sister, without any sense of honour or piety; and must we not imagine a Legion of Devils in his belly. When *Rollo* has murder'd his Brother, he stands condemn'd by the Laws of Poetry; and nothing remains but that the Poet see him executed, and the Poet is to answer for all the mischief committed afterwards. But *Rollo* we find has made his escape, and wo be to the Chancellor, to the Schoolmaster, and the Chancellors Man; for those are to be men of this world no longer. Here is like to be *Poetical Justice*, so many lives taken away, and but the life of one guilty person to answer for all, and is not this a strange method of killing? If the *Planets* had contriv'd him for a *Cock* of thirteen, his first Victory should not have been the most important, he should first have practis'd on his subjects, and have risen by degrees to the height of iniquity. His Brother Sovereign was his top-murder; nothing remain'd after that, unless it were his Lady-Mother.

Neither is *Otto* here a much more taking Gentleman, nothing appears in his *Cue* to move pity, or any way make the Audience of his party.

But of all the world who would ever have expected that *Aubrey* is to succeed in the Kingship? 'Tis a good man, but the dullest good man that ever Poet advanc'd to a Throne by such extraordinary means. Some Dreams or old Prophecie should have begun an expectation in us; or some *Lambent-fires* incircling his head, have drawn the peoples eyes upon him. *Rollo* and *Otto* must both make untimely ends, to make way for *Aubrey*. So strange a Revolution never happens in Poetry, but either Heaven or Earth gives some forenotice of it.

However, something shining and extraordinary ought to have

appear'd in his *Character*. Indeed he parts *Rollo* and *Otto* fighting, and *Rollo* was once disarm'd by him. But then for decencies sake and *Rollo's* credit, he should have been lookt on as something more than a meer Subject. In all the rest he appears an humble endeavourer, speaks honestly to no purpose, is brav'd and abus'd by Rascals. Whereas each step of his should have been attended with such awe and Majesty, that the spectators, if not guess, might at least wish to see him their Sovereign; and have the pleasure to see their wishes successful.

*Gisbert* and *Baldwin*, Chancellor and Tutor are *Devota Capita*, only come on the *Stage* to make *Rollo* the greater sinner by their murder.

Further to shew his rage against the Chancellor, says *Rollo*,

*Captain, besides remember this in chief,  
That being executed, you deny,  
To all his Friends the rites of Funeral,  
And cast his Carkass out to Dogs and Fowls.*

<III, i, 222-5>

No reason here is given for this inhumanity.

On the like occasion *Sophocles* contriv'd a Tragedy, the *Plot* is this. By the death of *Etheocles* and *Polynices*, *Creon* King of *Thebes* made an Edict, that none, upon pain of being buried alive, should presume to give burial to *Polynices*, the reasons pretended are, That *Polynices* had brought Forreigners to invade his Country, and *Etheocles* had dyed in his Countreys defence, and therefore it would be unjust to give to both the same honour of Funeral. He further alledges a charge left by *Etheocles* to the same effect. Now the piety of *Antigone* could not digest so hard a Law, but in the night she goes and covers her Brother with earth, is taken by the Watch, and (*Creon* being deaf to all intercession) is sent to punishment. When the Bishop *Tyresias* reproving *Creon* strikes him with remorse, who thereupon runs himself to reprieve her, hears from her Tomb the last groans of his only Son *Hæmon*, who he finds had stabb'd himself and lay a dying at the feet of *Antigone*, his dead Mistress. This disaster brought the same violent Fate on the Queen *Eurydice*, and with her depriv'd *Creon* of all that could be dear to him in the world.



In this we have every thing *just*, every thing *surprizing*, every thing *passionate* to extremity.

Whereas in *Rollo* we meet with so much stuff lumberd together, that not the least spring can work, nor the least passion stir, that is pleasant or generous; nor the least proportion or beauty of Tragedy appear. *Aristotle* says that an Image drawn with Chalk in the exact shape and symmetry, will please more then a whole potful of the best Colours thrown upon a wall without any figure or design.

But to proceed with the Characterrs. *Sophia* at the first appears a woman of spirit, in opposing so vehemently the division of the Dukedom. But she ill maintains this Character; when *Rollo* in her presence murders his Brother, threatens both her and her Daughter, she very tamely exhorts the Daughter to a vile compliance, says she

*Rise Daughter, serve his will in what we may,*

*Least what he may not, he enforce the rather.*

*Is this all you command us?*

<III, i, 162-4>

She ought surely in another sort of tone to have resented this outrage, or before to have manifested a partiality for *Rollo*.

At his death History informs us she died of grief. 'Tis a wonder this Tragedy spares her; hers would have been a more decent and Poetical death then any of the rest. In this the History is the better Tragedy.

The Princess *Matilda* for the small part she bears, acquits her self bravely enough. Yet, methinks, *Aubrey* and she should have exchange'd some words; some glances have been cast, or otherways some approaches have been begun. For here there scarce go three words to the bargain. In the last lines of the Play he comes to this Lady as abruptly as to the *Dukedom*, both drop into his mouth.

In Edith these waylings, clingings, and beseechings; these showers of tears and words.

——as you are a god above us,

*Be as a god then full of saving pity,*

*Mercy, O Mercy Sir, for his sake Mercy,*

*That when your stout heart weeps, shall give you pity.*

*Here I must grow.*

<III, i, 272-6>

This sort of importunity is nothing so proper in this place, it might much better become *Comedy*, where Miss *La Fool* intercedes for little Dog on Moncky, in peril for some misdemeanor; something more of stomach and courage had suited her better. Tragedy requires not what is only Natural, but what is great in Nature, and such thoughts as quality and Court-education might inspire. She might indeed be surpriz'd, and at the first let the meer Natural woman escape a little, but one or two so harsh and barbarous repulses should have rouz'd that Tragical spirit so vilely prostituted, and made her reflect on the other bloody scenes, so lately acted before her eyes, and caus'd her to despair before she had troubl'd us with her endless impertinencies.

Nor indeed comes short of her for tongue and wind, the old *Dutchess*, when in all reason one might expect that so violent grief and passions would choak them; they run chattering, as if the concern were no more then a *gossiping*: theirs are not of the old cut, *Curæ leves loquuntur ingentes stupent.*

Take her then resolv'd to kill this *Holofernes*, when she sets up for a *Heroine*, and will revenge the blood of the murder'd King *Otto*, of her Father, and the rest. When that scene presents her full of dire design and bloody purpose, we then indeed have her concise in word, and *Laconick* in the *repartee*. To his Complements she answers.

*Your grace is full of game.*

*Wilt please you sit Sir.*

*Of what Sir.*

*Has a strange cunning tongue,*

*Why do you sigh Sir.*

*My anger melts, O I shall lose my justice.*

*His tongue will tempt a Saint.*

*He will fool me.*

<V, ii, 49, 56, 59, 64, 85, 149, 100>

Is it likely that a Lady in her circumstances could be sensible what a pretty lisping way he had with him; or could listen to the soft things he spoke, or answer him so lightly? is not this more like some *Minx* in an Alley, then any Character for Tragedy? There are in Women comical frailties, and heroick frailties: and several con-

siderations might have made her resolution stagger; but this of the *tempting tongue* is *Comedy* out of season.

I would also in this scene note this passage, says

*Ham.* Pray.

*Roll.* Pray.

*Ham.* Pray if thou canst pray, I will kill thy soul else.

Pray suddenly.

<V, ii, 115–18>

This I think sounds not so well in Poetry, whatever it may do in Divinity. And now that I am upon the short Dialogues, let me cite one that went before.

*Ham.* See *Sir Gisberts head*.

*Roll.* Good speed, was't with a Sword.

*Ham.* An Axe, my Lord.

*Roll.* An Axe, 'twas vilely done.

<III, i, 243–5>

But leaving *Edith*, let us examine what was there in this *Latorch* to give him the ascendant over his Sovereign? Was it his Quality, his Valour, or some Pestilent Wit, or what Fiddle had he to Charm this savage Master of his? \*An Historian (who was never taxt for a prodigal of his words) could not mention the *Dame* that led *Cataline* astray, without annexing the Inventory of her Excellencies, as how well she Danc'd, how she handl'd the Lute, and how she spoke Greek. Yet *Rollo* a Prince of as great importance to us, is led by the Nose to do all the mischiefs under the Sun; and no body knows who 'tis does manage him.

'Tis possible that a Prince may abandon himself to be rul'd by some busie creature of no consideration. The *Annals* of *Normandy* may mention such *Dukes*.

*History* may have known the like. But *Aristotle* cries shame. *Poetry* will allow of nothing so unbecoming, nor dares any Poet imagine that God Almighty would trust his Anointed with such a Guardian Devil.

In the third *Act* enters *Hamond*, Captain of the Guard, and is a nimble Executioner; and who would guess this the Man ordain'd to kill the Dragon. But whether in Poetry this job more properly belong'd to *Edith*, or to this *Hamond*, may be a question.

\* *Salust*.

In the first place 'tis resolv'd that to neither of them did it belong, but that (of the two) *Edith* might rather have kill'd *Rollo*, the following reasons may prove, viz.

1. To *Edith* the provocation was greater; a Father engaging our Piety more strongly then a Brother.

2. *Hamond* holding a place of trust, had a stricter tye upon him: and *Edith* lying under no such obligation; the fact in her would not have been subject to so many aggravations.

3. She, as a woman, might be presum'd not so well to understand Allegiance, and to distinguish how far her Piety was to be restrain'd by it.

4. As in her sex reason is said to be more feeble, so the Passions are suppos'd to be the more violent and precipitate.

5. The punishment had been more signal and more grievous to the Tyrant, dying by the hand of a woman, and a woman to whom he was making love.

6. By a woman the fact would have been more surprising and extraordinary; and greater would have been the wonder, which a Poet always endeavours for, when it clashes not with probability.

7. *Baldwin* is of better quality then *Allan*. For though the Maid might be content enough to be rob'd of her revenge; yet what would her Fathers Ghost say? And indeed what would the *Chancellor's* and *Otto's* Ghost say? was their blood dumb? or was not the cry of their blood to be heard? must they be murder'd and no harm ensue? only to the Manes of the Chancellors Man must this Monarch be sacrific'd.

*Allan te hoc vulnere*——says *Hamond*.

*Allan*, my Brother *Allan* gives this stab.

*Allan* is seems is satisfi'd, whilst his betters must be fain to appeal, and wait till *Doomsday*.

Hitherto the Plot and Characters.

For the thoughts and good sense, compare the speech against dividing the Dukedom, with that in *Herodian* (from whence our Author takes it) on that same occasion. Upon the division it was agreed, the one Brother to have *Europe*, the other to have *Asia*; which their Mother hearing, thus spoke,

*The Sea and Land, my Sons, you have found how to divide; the*

*Propontick, you say, is a bound for either Continent, but how is it that you will divide your Mother? how shall wretched I be cut in two and disposed on to each of you? first, therefore, first slay me, and each of you take his moiety with him, and bury it. So with the Sea and Land, I also shall be divided between you.*

*Says Sophia,*

*Divide me first, and tear me limb by limb,  
And let them find as many several graves,  
As there are Vilages in Normandy,  
And 'tis less sin than so to weaken it.  
To hear it mention'd, does already make me  
Envy my dead Lord, & almost Blaspheme  
Those powers which heard my prayers for fruitfulness.  
And did not with my first birth close my womb.  
To me alone my second blessing proves my first,  
My first of misery, for if heaven  
That gave me Rollo, there had stay'd his bounty,  
And Otto, my dear Otto ne're had been,  
Or being had not been so worth my love;  
The stream of my affection had run constant,  
In one fair current all my hopes had been  
Laid up in one, and fruitful Normandy  
In this division had not lost her glories.  
For as 'tis now, 'tis a fair Diamond  
Which being preserv'd entire, exceeds all value  
But cut in pieces (though these pieces are  
Set in fine gold by the best workmans cunning)  
Parts with all estimation. So this Kingdom  
As 'tis yet whole, the neighbouring Kings may covet  
But cannot compass, which divided will  
Become the spoil of every barbarous Foe  
That will invade it.*

<I, i, 338–63>

The former speech seems to show a Woman of great spirit, labouring to contain her passion till she may utter her mind: But this latter seems to present a *well-breath'd* and *practis'd* Scold, who vents her passion and eases her mind by talking, and can weep and talk everlastingly.

In that of *Julia* we find but one *thought*, yet that follow'd close and press'd with all the vehemence that a strong passion might inspire; as may be easily apprehended by any who understand in *Virgil*,

*It lachrymans, guttisque humectat grandibus ora.*

She is not content to say, divide me, but to lay the Image before their eyes, and make the stronger impression. She will, *like the Sea and Land be divided*, be cut in two, be shar'd out to them, to each his moiety, &c.

But what a pother makes the old *Dutchess*? never *French* Author hash'd and kickshaw'd a little sense into so many words that signifie nothing. She manages as if she were to hold forth by the glass: Had her passion after the first three words burst out at her eyes, had she wept and torn her hair, her *Rhetorick* had been more moving, and better understood, and she had acquitted her self Heroically: But she falls off immediately, as if she had bolted out some rash thing at first, and was afraid of being ta'ne at her word; her tongue runs over her passion, and steals into matters that lean another way, and she talks as if she would talk the impression of her first words quite out of the hearers heads again. After the three first words she flies from the only thought that was proper, high enough, and proportionable to her passion: she is for being split in as many pieces as there are *Villages* in *Normandy*; which expression scatters the thought, breaks the resemblance and carries all remote from the occasion, and must in effect move but very indifferently. From thence she plunges into such impertinent and inconsistent wild *jar-gon* as is obvious to any man. That of the *Diamond* is a good thought in it self; but in this place comes very cold from her mouth, 'tis no more than if she had said, *Divide the Dukedom, divide me first, nay divide a Diamond*, &c. Naturally in a great passion none have leisure to ramble for comparisons, much less to compute the value of *Diamonds* whole or broken.

I question not the *Grammar*, nor how Poetical the stile is, I rest in the sense, nor had yet been so particular, but that I take all this Tragedy to be of the same *piece* for the writing, unless that scene of the *Astrologers*; and the Comical part, than which nothing can be more diverting.



Speeches of more mettle I confess we have in the Play, and to *Latorch* we are oblig'd for them.

*No friends, Sir, to your honour,  
 Friends to your fall, where is your understanding  
 The noble vessel that your full soul sail'd in,  
 Ribb'd round with honours, where is that? 'tis ruin'd.  
 The tempest of a womans sighs has sunk it.  
 Friendship, take heed, Sir, is a smiling Harlot.  
 That when she kisses, kisses a soder'd friendship,  
 Piec'd out with Promises; O painted Ruine! <II, i, 29-36>*

This *Latorch* alwaies *Cants* at this rate, and an extraordinary *Muse* attends him. We may, I think, conclude the success of this Play due chiefly to the Scenes for laughter, the merry jig under the Gallows, and where the Tragedy tumbles into the Kitchen among the Skoundrels that never saw buskin in their lives before. There the Pantler and Cook give it that relish which renders it one of the most followed entertainments in the Town.

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### A KING AND NO KING

*Well fares it with Tragedy, (says an \*old stager)  
 The title is no sooner known, but the Spectators see into the design,  
 And agree what they are to expect.  
 Name Oedipus, they know Laius was his Father,  
 Jocasta his Mother, and all the generation:  
 So there needs no more but hold up a finger,  
 The Curtain's drawn, and to't they go.  
 But ill is our condition,  
 We are fain to coin new words,  
 Explain what is past, present, and to come,  
 Yet never can be understood enough,  
 And without this ado whether Phidon  
 Or whether Chremes enters, he is hist off the Stage;  
 When as Teucer, Oedipus, or Peleus  
 Might come with authority.*

\* *Antiphanes* apud *Athen*.

Our Authors we see, never make use of the advantage which that *Comedian* envy'd so much in Tragedy. This Title gives no more light into the design, then had they call'd it *Hocus Pocus*; and indeed the name seems rather to promise a *Comedy*, and one might expect some sort of *Mammamouchy* King, or Cozen of *Duke Trinckelo's* for the Heroe of the Play.

#### THE PLOT IS THIS

The Queen of *Iberia*, *Arane*, had feign'd her self with child, and made use of *Gobrias's* Son to carry out the cheat. She afterwards proves truly with child, which came to be *Panthea*, durst not discover the first cheat, so that *Arbaces* (*Gobrias's* Son) became actually King, is made really so by marrying *Panthea*.

#### THE REST IS ALL EPISODE

In this Fable appears some proportion, shape, and (at the first sight) an *outside* fair enough, yet at the bottom we hardly find what is more choice, or more *exquisite* and more *perfect* than History. By the *turn* of the *Plot*, if we look on *Arane*, this Play might have been call'd *The Deceiver Deceiv'd*, if we look on *Arbaces*, the title might have been *The Fortunate Imposter*, *The lucky Sham*, or something of that kind; which shows a want of that *good sense* in it which Tragedy requires.

There might have been feigned some right to the Crown long contested between the two Families; (as ours of *York* and *Lancaster*) and bloody civil war ready to break out; when unexpectedly all grew husht and ended in a marriage; which (by a train long laid by *Gobrias*) took effect. This marriage should not have seem'd so advantageous to the false King, and his Father who brought it about; but by manifest reasons of *state* appear'd absolutely necessary for the good of the Kingdom, and above all things, desired and labour'd for by the relations of *Panthea*.

Whereas on the contrary, we find the Queen Mother attempting to poison this usurper, and see no reason to blame her endeavours.

What sets this *Fable* below History, are many *improbabilities*, and those of the worst sort; because they contribute nothing to the wonder. What more improbable, than that the Mother whose busi-

ness it was to contrive the death of the Imposter, should never caution or inform her only Daughter, who had the right to the Crown, that *Arbaces* was none of her Brother, but her vassal, and so obstruct her love for him?

Nor is it likely that *Gobrias* should not have reserv'd some means to let his Son know the secret, that his Sons conduct and addresses to gain the Princess, might have been fashion'd accordingly.

The Characters are all *improbable* and *unproper* in the highest degree, besides that both these, their actions and all the *lines* of the Play run so wide from the *Plot*, that scarce ought could be imagin'd more contrary.

We blunder along without the least streak of light, till in the *last act* we stumble on the *Plot*, lying all in a lump together; neither any tolerable direction to guide us thither; nor ought ingenious, just, or reasonable, that carries us from thence.

What find we in the Son of *Gobrias* that he must have the Princess and the Kingdom for her portion, save only that the Knave his Father will have it so?

Take his picture sent before him, and drawn by a friend.—*He is vainglorious, and humble, and angry, and patient, and merry, and dull, and joyful, and sorrowful, in extremity in an hour—*Should we find underwritten *This is a King*, yet could not reason give way to our belief.

*Kings of Tragedy* are all Kings by the Poets *Election*, and if such as these must be elected, certainly no *Polish Diet* would ever suffer Poet to have a voice in choosing a King for them. Nor will it serve that *Arbaces* is not truly a King, for he is actually such, and intended for a true and rightful King before the Poet has done with him, what wants in Birth the Poet should make up in his Merit, every one is to consent and wish him King, because the Poet designs him for one, 'tis (besides) observ'd that Usurpers generally take care to deserve by their conduct what is deny'd them by right.

We are to presume the greatest vertues, where we find the highest of rewards; and though it is not necessary that all *Heroes* should be Kings, yet undoubtedly all crown'd heads by *Poetical right* are *Heroes*. This Character is a flower, a prerogative, so certain, so inseparably annex'd to the *Crown*, as by no Poet, no *Parliament* of Poets, ever to be invaded.

*Arbaces* indeed is of a different mould, he no sooner comes on the Stage, but lays about him with his tongue at so nauseous a rate, Captain *Bessus* is all Modesty to him, to mend the matter his friend shaking an empty skull, says *'Tis pity that valour should be thus drunk*. Had he been content to brag only amongst his own Vassals, the fault might be more sufferable, but the King of *Armenia* is his prisoner, he must bear the load of all; he must be swagger'd at, insulted over, and trampled on without any provocation. We have a *Scene* of his sufferings in each *Act* of the Play: *Bajazet* in the *Cage* was never so carried about, or felt half the barbarous indignities which are thrown on this unfortunate Prince by our monster of a King.

If the Poet would teach that victory makes a man insolent; he must at the same time make victory blush, and fly to the other side; as a just punishment for him that had abused her favours.

To the Queen-Mother his language is, *Plagues rot the adulterous Witch! thou worse than Woman dam'd—strumpet—whore! &c.* to his Father *Gobrias*;

*Curses incurable, and all the evils  
Man's body or his spirit can receive,  
Be with thee.*

<V, iv, 68–70>

To the Princess *Panthea* his supposed Sister, after having cast her in Prison, and a thousand outrages very coarsely.

*Arb. I have beheld thee with a lustful eye.  
My heart is set on wickedness, to act  
Such sins with thee, as I have been afraid  
To think of. If thou dar'st consent to this,  
(Which I beseech thee do not) thou mayst gain  
Thy liberty, and yield me a content:  
If not, thy dwelling must be dark and close.*

<IV, iv, 71–7>

These speeches, drawing his Sword at the Queen-Mother, and the other outrages, make the sum of our *Heroes* vertues, and neither worse nor better find we throughout his character. *Arbaces* should have been consider'd in a double capacity; he should have been endu'd with all the greatness of mind, and generosity of a

King, and also with the *modesty* of a Subject. The want of which, is a great aggravation of his faults; for his carriage towards the Royal Captive, towards the Queen-Mother, towards the Princess, as he was a King, were insupportable, as *no King*, it was all abominable. History sometimes takes notice of a certain *instinct* which has strangely hinder'd many unnatural actions. A Poet, I am sure, ought always to have that *instinct*, or some good *genius* ready to serve his *Heroe* upon occasion, to prevent these unpleasant *shocking* indecencies, which otherwise might happen. This *instinct* should in *Arbaces* have begot a respect to his Father *Gobrias*, and have humbl'd him in the presence of such as were truly of the *Blood Royal*.

And far from *decorum* is it, that we find the King *drolling* and quibbling with *Bessus* and his Buffoons, and worse, that they should presume to break their little jests upon him.

This too is *natural*, some will say. There are in nature many things which *Historians* are ashamed to mention, as below the dignity of an History: Shall we then suffer a *Tom Coriat* in Poetry? Shall we on the most important day of a King's Reign, and at Court be content with such entertainment as is not above a Cobler's shop? Might not a Poet as well describe to us how the King eats and drinks, or goes to *Stool*; for these actions are also *natural*: but observe the behaviour of *Arbaces*, after that he is found to be *no King*. Now he will make amends, and give satisfaction to all he had wrong'd. To the Gentlemen about him.

Arb. *Why do you keep your hats off, Gentlemen?*

*Is it to me? I swear it must not be.*

*Nay, trust me, in good Faith it must not be.*

*I cannot now command you, but I pray you,*

*For the respect you bear me, when you took*

*Me for your King, each man clap on his hat*

*At my desire.*

<V, iv, 276–82>

And surely the Captive King cannot but be content, when told that

Arb. *He shall go so home, as never man went.*

Mardon. *Shall he go on's head?*

Arb. *He shall have Chariots easier than air,*

*That I will have invented; and ne'r think  
He shall pay any ransom: And thy self  
That art the Messenger shalt ride before him  
On an Horse cut out of an intire Diamond,  
That shall be made to go with golden Wheels.  
I know not how, yet. <V, iv, 312-20>*

For the Captive King's Mistress;

*Arb. She shall have some strange thing; we'l have the Kingdom  
Sold utterly, and put into a toy,  
Which she shall wear about her carelessly  
Somewhere or other. <V, iv, 323-6>*

Now, that he is no King, nor has ought to give, he is for selling all without asking leave of the true Sovereign *Panthea*. To her his Compliment is,

*Arb. Grant me one request.*

*Pant. Alas, what can I grant you? what I can, I will.*

*Arb. That you will please to marry me.*

*If I can prove it lawful.*

*Pant. Is that all?*

*More willingly than I would draw this air. <V, iv, 328-33>*

Should not rather the *Spirit of Majesty* have now rouz'd up in the Princess, and she have call'd to mind his late brutish insolence, and have call'd him impudent Slave, and discharg'd a frown that should have struck him dead, or commanded him to be *nail'd* to the floor as *false coin*, and a *counterfeit* stamp of Majesty. And certainly his *character* could deserve no better fate. But for his comfort, this Princess was none of those. One might swear she had a knock in the Cradle; so soft she is at all points, and so silly. No *Linsey-woolsey* Shepherdess but must have more *soul* in her, and more sense of *decency* (not to say) honour. To this Vassal of hers, on her knees for half an hour together, she whines at this rate, viz.

*Pan. I know I am unworthy, yet not ill  
Arm'd, with which innocence I here will kneel  
Till I am one with earth; but I will gain  
Some words, and kind ones, from you. <III, i, 72-5>*



Thus she continues, and by and by he *kisses her thrice*, then calls her *Witch, Poisoner, Traitor*, sends her to Prison; she thanks him with all her heart.

*Nay, 'tis well the King is pleas'd with it.*

<III, i, 307-8>

At the next meeting she will needs be closer and closer to him; he cannot keep her off him, he tells her he would commit *incest* with her: She returns a drawling, yawning, yielding answer; and proceeds to tell him, that she wishes he were not her Brother, that she loves him so well, she can love no man else; she shall weep her eyes out: and farther.

*Pan. But is there nothing else*

*That we may do, but only walk? methinks*

*Brothers and Sisters lawfully may kiss.*

<IV, iv, 151-3>

Had *Panthea* been some *Wastcoateer* of the Village, that had been formerly *Complaisant* with him beyond discretion, more vile submissions she could not devise: But as she is lawful *Sovereign*, nothing could be invented more opposite to all *honesty, honour, and decorum*. If we consider them as Brother and Sister, 'tis horribly wicked. If we look on her as *Sovereign*, and him as her *Subject*, what can be more dishonourable? So that if *instinct* guided their love, as lawful and warrantable; it may be answer'd, that the same *instinct* should have prevented that love, as insolent and presumptuous in *Arbaces*, base and unbecoming in *Panthea*. For whether a Lady may better marry her Brother, or her Groom, is a question more easily decided in Divinity, than in Poetry.

We are let to know that the Queen-Mother was for removing the Usurper by poison, and for bringing all into the right channel agen. This we might expect to be a Woman *couragious*, and truly *Tragical*: yet we find her the veriest *patient Grissel* that ever had lain by a Monarch's side. She comes but thrice on the Stage; the first time she is rebuk'd by *Gobrias*, with the same language that the *Vicar of Newgate* might dispence to some *sinner* forlorn; then she is on her *mary-bones* to the Imposter without reluctance. Lastly, when provok'd with a drawn Sword, and words more cutting, the

proudest rant she could be rais'd to, was:—*Fire consume me if ever I was a Whore.* <V, iv, 193–4>

If nothing else in the character of *Arbaces*, the drawing his Sword against a *Woman*, was enough in Poetry to damn him. After that outrage, he could make no pretensions to ought that is good or honourable.

On this occasion memorable is that passage in *Virgil*, where *Æneas* after having related, how the Town on fire about his ears,—on the sudden awak'd from his sleep,—flung headlong by rage and despair,—forsaken by his reason,—his friends slaughter'd about him,—the King *Priam* murder'd before his face:—when he spies the cause of all this, *Hellen*, skulking in a corner—at the sight of her.

*Exarsere ignes animo, subit ira cadentem  
Ulcisci patriam, & sceleratas sumere pœnas, &c.*

All which, with what follows, comes to no more, than had he said;—In that nick of time I even made a question within my self, whether I was not to take revenge on her; to that degree of madness had my troubles wrought me.

*Talia jactabam, & furiata mente ferebar.*

Now here, this revenge goes no farther than his thoughts; these thoughts——*Æneas* himself condemns, and calls them madness; and is also sharply reprov'd for them by his *Guardian Angel*,

*Nate, quis indomitas tantus furor excitat iras?  
Quid furis?*

No man but *Virgil* could ever pen any thing with that infinite care and caution as is this particular passage. One might think *Virgil* foresaw whatever could be objected; and provided against all scruples.

Yet of such a nice tast were the *Criticks* in that age of good sense; that *Varus* and *Tucca* struck out all the 22 Verses which contain this passage. These were employ'd by *Augustus* to inspect what (by the untimely death of *Virgil*) might have been left imperfect, and they durst not suffer these 22 lines to pass, though essential to

the Poem; so tender they were, lest their *Heroe* might lye under a suspicion of transgressing in any *punctilio* of that nature.

We need not make a controversy whether *Virgil* or his *Criticks* be in the right: But if *Virgil* will not in a man allow the *thought* of striking a Woman in any circumstances, unless he condemns himself for that *thought*. And if his *Criticks* will not permit a *thought* of that kind with any *qualifications* whatsoever; then we may well conclude, that *Poetry* to be very *gross*, where the *men* both think, and speak, and act their *cruelties* against *Women*, without any shame or restraint.

But *Arbaces*, though mad, and flash'd upon by never so great a *hurrican* of provocations, was not to be allow'd to think of striking; because the *Womans quality* was above his, and made her sacred. Neither in this point is there a difference betwixt an *Epick Poem* and a *Tragedy*; when the conclusion of both is *prosperous*.

As here, *Æneas*, a King, of great merit, by the assistance of Heaven, and his friends, after much labour, marries *Lavinia*.

And *Arbaces*, no King, of no merit, without friends in Heaven, or on the Earth; without any trouble weds his King's only Daughter, and the Kingdom of *Iberia* is her portion.

I know with the Ancients, *Orestes* kill'd his Mother, *Hercules* his Wife and Children, *Agamemnon* his Daughter. But the first was an act of *Justice*; the second of *Frenzy*; the last of *Religion*. But these were all Tragedies unhappy in the *catastrophe*. And the business so well prepar'd; that every one might see, that these Worthies had rather have laid violent hands on themselves, had not their *will* and choice been over-rul'd. Every step they made, appear'd so contrary to their inclinations, as all the while shew'd them unhappy, and render'd them the most *deserving* of pitty in the World.

Another *Canker* in the heart of this *Tragedy*, is the incestuous love (for such it appears) between *Arbaces* and *Panthea*, I mean, the *conduct* of it. When any *design* on the *Stage* is in agitation, the Poet must take care that he engage the affections, take along the heart, and secure the good will of the Audience. If the *design* be wicked, as here the making approaches towards an *incestuous* enjoyment; the *Audience* will *naturally* loath and detest it, rather than favour or accompany it with their good wishes. 'Tis the sad effects and consequences of an ill *design* which the *Audience* love to have

represented: 'tis then that the *penitence*, *remorse* and *despairs* move us: 'tis then that we grieve with the sorrowful, and weep with those that weep.

Therefore were the Ancients to make an *incestuous* love their subject; they would *take* it in the *fall*, as it rowls down headlong to desperation and misery.

Many in the *World* for their interest may comply and help forward the *advances* towards an ill action; but on the *Stage* there is no kindred nor filthy lucre to biass the *Audience*, or make them partial to the evil-doer. If the Poet observe not these measures, the *working up of a Scene*, is plainly the tormenting of nature, and holding our ears to the *Grindstone*.

For an incestuous love, famous amongst the Ancients, was the *tale* of *Macareus* and *Canace*. In the list of those Tragedies wherein *Nero* delighted to be an *Actor*, *Suetonius* reckons *Canace parturiens*. The title may satisfy us, that all the soft things, all the amours, the flowers and *fleurets* were over, e're the Offenders entred on the *Stage*.

In this last age a noble \**Italian* compos'd a Tragedy of *Canace* after the *model* of the Ancients; for the time of the *action*: he also chooses the day of *Canaces labour*. And then the pangs of child-bearing are the easiest that she suffers. For, to heighten the disgrace, this Poet feigns *Macareus* and *Canace* to be *Twins*, and this day to have been their birth day, which the King, their Father, is about to solemnize with a Festival. Immediately we find the two Offenders (under their apprehension of being discover'd) in the greatest confusion and despair imaginable. But that we might more justly pity them, he informs us, that their crime proceeded not from any folly or miscarriage in themselves which they might have avoided; but that a †*resistless power above*, and Cœlestial force had over-rul'd them: that indeed *Venus* had an old reck'ning with their *Father Æolus*, for persecuting her *Æneas*, and thus she discharg'd it with a *vengeance*.

By the rule of the Antients no colours, no sophistry or ribaldry's,

\* *Speroni Sperone.*

† *Non malattia mortale,*

*Mà fa celeste forza*

*Non propria elettione,*

*Mà un impeto fatal.*————

were us'd to lessen a crime before it was committed: for then their Rhetorick could have no good effect, but must have *grated* on the hearers patience. But after the fact, when its punishment came heavy upon it, then all their art and invention was at work, to find out circumstances to extenuate the guilt, that the persons guilty might be capable of *pity*.

*Arbaces* in the dishonest love to his Sister, should have follow'd the example of that *Antiochus* in the History, who in love with his *Stepmother*, discover'd not his passion by any words or *gallantries*; but pin'd away, and gave himself over to dye; and had dy'd, if the dexterity of his Physitian had not by feeling his *Pulse* learnt the cause of his distemper.

The better to cleer this matter, I will trace the manners and conduct of *Phedra* in *Euripides*, where we are told that *Hippolytus* having too rudely slighted the Altars of *Venus*, she is offended, and will have the whole Family feel the effects of her resentment. To bring this about, she strikes *Phedra* with a poison'd dart, and makes her in love with this *Hippolytus*, her Son in Law. *Phedra* conceals her love, strives to overcome it, not prevailing, resolves to \*kill her self by fasting. And now for three days had she neither eat nor slept, when she first appears on the Stage. No wonder then if she talks very madly, she is in an hundred minds all at once, she tries all places and all postures, and is always uneasie in the present. *Now her dress is a pain to her, and now she will be carry'd to her Closet and shut up close, instantly agen, she calls to have her locks tied back, and nothing but the garb of an Amazon will please her, then she would sleep in some grott, and drink the waters from a mossie fountain. Now she cries for the open air, for ranging the hills, for driving the woods, for whooping the dogs, for chasing the Stag, and brandishing a Javelin: and ah that the horses were ready to mount. Now she complains of her distraction, and blames some †Divine power; and now her face is loaded with shame, confusion and tears. Hide me (she cries) ah hide me from the world, it pains her (she says) to return to her right senses.*

Here is a *Scene of Madness*, but not of *Bedlam-madness*; here is *Nature*, but not the *obscenities*, not the *blindsides* of Nature, which are represented when *Arbaces* and *Panthea* go loose together, and

\* Ἀσιτεῖ δ' εἰς ἀπόστασιν βλου.

† Ἐμάνην ἔπεσον δαίμονος ἄτα.

whether of the two Madnesses is the more apt to move *pity*, need not certainly be a question.

Hitherto cannot the Governess, Confident, or *Nurse* of *Phedra*, understand where *Phedra* is pinch'd. She sifts, importunes and conjures her, yet after all is no wiser till accidentally amongst other arguments whereby she would perswade *Phedra* to live, *Live*, says she, *otherwise you betray your Children to be Lorded over by that other womans Bastard, this Amazon's Son, I mean Hippolytus; woes me*, says *Phedra*, *you have undone me! name him no more*. The Nurse proceeds to torture her with questions, and *Phedra* returns as many preplexed answers, till at the last says *Phedra*,

*Phed. What is it that men call to be in love?*

*Nurse. It is of all things the sweetest, and also the most bitter.*

*Phed. I have sufficiently experienc'd both.*

*Nurse. What says my Child, do you love any Man?*

*Phed. Who is that same, that of the Amazon?*

*Nurse. Say you Hippolytus?*

*Phed. This from your self you hear, but not from me.*

*Alas! undone! intolerable, cries the Nurse, and she will not live one moment longer. And concludes that all, (even modest women too against their will) would be naught, and that Love is the very-est god almighty; there is not the fellow of him in all the heavenly gang.*

I have only cited the conclusion of this *Scene*, to note the utmost advances of *Phedra* towards a confession, the only crime of which she was guilty; and to show that this Nurse (so long kept in ignorance) was no fool, but subtle and nimble enough to catch and run away with the least *hint* that could be offer'd.

In the former *Scene* all the conflict was between love and modesty; this presents *love* and an active *friendship* join'd, both at once labouring to subdue this *modesty*, so far only as to extort a confession. The *Nurse* with wrung hands lies at *Phedra's* feet, embraces her knees, begs her to live, for her Childrens sake to live, and tell her pain. *Phedra* strives, would be from the Nurses hands, complains of the violence, promises to tell, yet raves and rambles, speaks short and ambiguous, all is darkness; whilst every where tenderness, passion and modesty reign, and appear to admiration.



This Scene having wrought off the *Remains* of *Phedra's* frenzy, in the next she seems more calm, her mind more at ease, and now will move *pity* from a new *Topick*, for now this unfortunate Lady is found to be a woman of great sense and understanding. She reasons (to the Chorus) and wonders how humane life becomes so corrupt, for certainly (says she) it cannot be natural to do amiss, when we understand what is right. Yet thus it happens, we have before our eyes, and know what is good, but we practise otherwise. Some out of sloath, and others preferring a kind of pleasure before honesty; there be many pleasures of life, as conversation, ease (a sweet evil), and modesty. Now there are two sorts of pleasure, one good, this other the bane of Families: but would this appear always in its true colours, 'twould no longer be counted pleasure. These things when I consider'd, I thought no Philter could ever seduce me to act against my knowledge.

But to open my mind to you, after love had wounded me, I cast with my self how I might bear my illness the most decently, and from that time made it my care to hide my distemper and keep it to my self. Secondly, I resolv'd to get my right senses agen, and with chastity to overcome my frenzy. In the third place, if the attempt to cure my distemper prov'd vain, I then thought my best course would be to dye.

For I knew the disease to be infamous, and especially in me a woman, odious to all people.

Then she curses those who first polluted the Marriage-bed. And hates the baggages that can talk so smoothly, and yet will do naughty things in a corner. \*Blessed Lady, says she, how can they look their husbands in the face? how can they but tremble at their †confederate darkness? and be afraid that the very ‡walls and doors should open and cry whore at 'um.

She concludes, Therefore dear friends, this same shall kill me, that I may never be taken to disgrace my Husband, and the Children I have brought forth.

The Nurse perceiving her Mistress thus resolute, sets her tongue a running to this purpose.

\* Πῶς ποτ' ὦ δέσποινα ποντία κύπρι,

† ——— τὸν συνεργάτην.

‡ ——— τέρεμνα τ' οἴκων,

*Lady (quoth she) I was lately in a twittering fear for you,  
 But now I confess my self hen-hearted.  
 It has been said, that second thoughts are the wisest.  
 And now (believe me) there is nothing singular,  
 Nothing unreasonable in your case.  
 The truth is, the goddess is terrible angry at you.  
 Well, you love? that's no marvel.  
 And you would kill your self for love.  
 That wou'd be a pleasant pranck, if all that are,  
 And that are to be in love must presently take that course.  
 There is no striving,  
 No dodging with love, when it comes in earnest.  
 'Tis easie to those that are yielding.  
 But if you will be goodly, and think high of your self,  
 If you will resist and be stubborn,  
 Why, then there's no whoo with it,  
 It shakes and breaks, and thunders you to Atoms immediately.  
 Love is King of the air,  
 Whizz goes his power through the blew seas,  
 And we are all of us his offspring.  
 They who have read the Chronicles,  
 Or are skill'd in antient Ballades,  
 Can tell us stories of Jupiter, Semele, Cephalus,  
 Of such love, and such wild lovers as you wou'd think strange at.  
 Yet these Lovers (many of them) were \*prefer'd in heaven,  
 And now are waiting at gods ellbow.  
 The gods melted with their sufferings, cou'd not be angry.  
 And now you will be in a fit.  
 You cannot be content with the same Laws,  
 With the same Nature, with flesh and blood, like other folks.  
 You should have been hatchd' in Jupiter's brain,  
 And so been fram'd some blessed Angel.  
 How many men who are right in their senses,  
 See their bed tumbl'd, yet walk on,  
 And lets it trouble their heads no farther.  
 'Tis nine points of wisdom to keep that secret,*

\* ἀλλ' ὅμως ἐκ οὐρανῶ

ναίουσι, καὶ φεύγουσιν ἐκποδῶν θεοῦς.

Which would be no credit, when divulg'd.  
 Perfection is an airy notion, never to be found in practice.  
 Then surely they are well hop't up,  
 Who set themselves to live \*exactly.  
 As this world goes, if our good deeds out-tell the bad,  
 We shall make an handsome reck'ning.  
 Then, dear Child, be no longer in an ill mind,  
 For the goddess has an heavy pique against you.  
 And trust not that she will be check-mated by you.  
 Nor think you to be higher than the highest of all:  
 For such, in effect, is your last resolution.  
 And, to tell you plainly, 'tis an affront to'em.  
 Then pluck up a good heart,  
 And love on; since †God will have it so.  
 You have a wound, cure your wound.  
 There are Spells, and Charms, and ‡healing words,  
 Some remedy shall be found out for you.  
 And truly, if we Women cannot advise you,  
 The wit of man will come too late.

The Nurse here delivers all the *good sense* that could be proper for the occasion, as may be discern'd, notwithstanding the ill dress, in which I have disguis'd it. A less considering Poet would have displaid all this *dialogue-wise*, and made it a Scene of mighty sputter. But *Euripides* would not suffer his *Phedra* so far to countenance or listen to these lewd reasons, as once to think they deserv'd any particular answer. To dispute in a matter of this kind, would have been the next door to being convinc'd; and to contend, was to put her self in the way of being overcome. She therefore at once makes this return.

Ph. 'Tis thus that Towns and Kingdoms are destroy'd,  
 By a fair tongue and flattering speech decoy'd:  
 We should not file our words to please the ear;  
 But strike the mind, and kindle glory there.

To make short, the Nurse tells her that wise sentences will not do the business: that, for her part, she would not be the minister of any ones pleasure: but in this extremity, where life is at stake, she

\* ἀκριβώσιαι.

† θεὸς ἐβουλήθη τὰδε.

‡ λόγοι θελκτήριοι.

might without blame, for a violent disease, provide an extraordinary Cure.

*Phedra* calls these horrible, filthy speeches; and commands her to \*lock up her mouth.

The Nurse urges that her words, if they are not clean, they are wholesome; and the preservation of life was of more importance than any proud name she would boast on in her death.

But she (finding that this sort of discourse did the more exasperate and provoke her Mistress) recants. *But* (says she) now that it comes in my mind, I have at home †healing Philters that will work your Cure without touching upon your modesty.

*Phedra* is in fear, makes scruples, asks questions; which the Nurse evades, and tells her, she wanted not to be instructed, but to be assisted.

In the next *Scene* *Phedra* is on the Stage, and over-hears the Nurse within, exchanging some words with *Hippolytus*: whereupon she cries out, says, she is betraid, curses the Nurse, and resolves to kill her self. And now the apprehensions that *Hippolytus* would accuse her to his Father, made her write a Letter, laying all the blame on *Hippolytus*, as the best expedient (that amidst her distractions, she could on the sudden devise) to secure her honour, and to prevent the disgrace of her Family, and of her Children: and with this Letter in her hand, she hangs her self.

Had some Author of the last age given us the character of *Phedra*, they (to thicken the Plot) would have brought her in burning of Churches, poisoning her Parents, prostituting her self to the Grooms, solliciting her Son face to face, with all the importunity and impudence they could imagin; and never have left dawbing so long as there might remain the least cranny for either pitty or probability. They would never have left her, till she had swell'd to such a *Toad*, as nothing but an audience of brass could fit the sight of her.

But (for our credit) *Seneca*, before us, in this blind way of designing made no inconsiderable progress. We find his *Phedra* at the first dash justifying her incestuous love: and her Nurse is the Woman of sentences; who labours with all the wholesome advise, the sense and nonsense she could scrape together, to maul this mon-

\* οὐχὶ συγκλείσεις στόμα

† ἔστιν κατ' οἶκον φίλτρα μοι θελκτήρια.

strous lust that rag'd in her Nursling, *Phedra*. And whilst she goes on without any signs of success, *Phedra* surprises her, (on the sudden) resolving to *dye* with a good name. Whereupon the Nurse bids her be patient, and promises to try what she can do with the young man.

Without more words, the next *Scene* presents us *Phedra*, (as if the late resolution had never been made) all upon the *gallantry*, she is tricking her self up in *Masquerade*; and thus she hopes to win the Salvage *Hippolytus*, and the Nurse and she make their supplications to the Goddess of *Chastity* to help on their design. And now it is that the Nurse attacks him: but how? she expounds to him at large, that a *City-life* and *Women* are a comfortable *importance*; he answers in another *harangue*, that nothing is like to the *ranging* in the Countrey: and truly (for *Women*) he hates them all mortally. During this conference, *Phedra* reels in amongst them, falls in a swoon; and well is it for her that she is taken up in the arms of her beloved Son: therefore she takes heart, and puts it to him courageously. But words proving vain, she will needs *\*ravish* the poor stripling. Hereupon, to cut her neck off, he draws out the brown Faulcheon, †on which she laying her sweaty palms, he cries foh! flings it from him, and runs away. And now the Nurse puts in her word, and says, *marry*, 'tis the best way to be before-hand with him, and to cry Whore first. Accordingly they fly to *Theseus*, *Phedra* tells him that *Hippolytus* not only purposed, but had ‡effected his filthy purpose upon her body, do she what she could: and *ecce signum* shews the Sword to witness for her truth. Hereupon *Theseus* dispatches his Son *Hippolytus* into another World. And now (with a canker to her) comes *Phedra*, confesses the truth indeed, and kills her self.

Now in this *Phedra* of *Seneca*, what one occasion of *pitty* have we? what ground for *terror*? and, above all, what *manners* have we? ask the generality of *Women* if they are mov'd and concern'd, if their hearts and good will go along and attend the thoughts and motions of this *Phedra*? will they not answer that they know no such Woman, that she is no way a kin to them, nor has any resemblance with their nature? She must be some brat of a *Succubus*, or an evil

\* *Etiam in amplexus ruit?*  
*Stringatur ensis.*

† *Contactus ensis deserat castum latus.*  
‡ *Vim tamen corpus tulit.*

*Spirit*, (say they) that personates a Woman; or some *Devil* in a *Machine*, that comes to render the Sex odious. Nor can they allow her more compassion than to a Bitch, or *Polecat*, and what has no relation to human shape.

Nor can this be a cause of *terror*: for few Women would be apt to fancy that they could (in any circumstances) be so wicked as this *Phedra*. Each will say, were it my fate, or should I be curst to love where I ought not, I would certainly conceal my love, and strive with it, my thoughts, words, and actions, and all, my condition might be every way the same, or very like to that of *Phedra* in *Euripides*. But I could never speak or act at this impudent abominable rate, could never be transform'd to such a monster as this *Phedra* of *Seneca*. And since my conduct would not be the same, my case can never be the same; and consequently this *example* cannot move or concern, or have any operation to stir either *pitty* or *terror* in me.

I have been the more large on this matter, because it may serve as a certain and general *test*, whereby may be discover'd what is *naturally* apt to move *pitty* or *terror*. And this is founded on a Philosophy never contraverted, but alike current at *Malmsbury* as at *Athens*.

Every one have noted *Seneca* for his *unnatural* way of writing. Yet, besides what is already observ'd in his *characters*, I cannot leave him, without reminding you, that though he takes all his *thoughts* from *Sophocles* and *Euripides*, yet he rarely affords us any of their *good sense*. He crumbles every *thought* into all the little *points* that ever he can strain it to; and all these *points* (for, or against him, it matters not) must one way or other be apply'd.

Whensoever he finds a *Diamond*, he forces, and breaks it into an hunder'd pieces; never letting it rest so long as any of it will *sparkle*. I desire your patience but for one instance of this kind.

In the *Scene* where the *Nurse* presses to know what it is that pains her Mistress; amongst her other ravings, says *Phedra* in *Euripides*.

*\*What sort of love lov'dst thou, ah wretched Mother?  
And thou, unhappy Sister, Wife of Bacchus?  
The third unhappy, I.*

\* ὦ τλήμων, οἶον μήτερ ἡράσθης ἔρον



The Poet made *Phedra* say this, not only, as a proper and *natural* reflection, that these extravagant loves run in the blood; but as a *hint* of her disease, and withal so *qualifi'd*, as might also shew her *modesty*: for she puts less in the *conclusion* than was in the *premisses*. She *concludes* to the *unhappiness* only, and does not (as she might) say.

*And now the third unhappy Lover, I.*

We find *Seneca* baiting this *thought* six several times in one *Scene*, and we have at least, 40 lines in the Tragedy all meer *descant* upon it.

Ph. *Fatale* (a) *miseræ matris agnosco malum,*  
*Peccare noster novit in sylvis amor, &c.*

Ph. *Aut quis juvare* (b) *dædalus flammas queat, &c.*

Nat. ——— (c) *Quid domum infamem gravas*  
*Superasq; matrem?*

Nat. (e) *Memorq; matris metue concubitus novos.*

Nu. *Cur monstra cessant? aula cur fratris vacat?*

*Prodigia toties orbis insueta audiet,*

*Natura toties legibus cedat suis,*

*Quoties Amabit Cressa?*

Nu. *Patris memento:* Ph. (d) *Meminimus matris simul.*

Nu. *Adoritq; genitor.* Ph. *Mitis* (f) *Ariadnæ pater.*

Hipp. *O majus ausa matre monstrifera malum,*

*Genetrice peior! illa se tantum stupro*

*Contaminavit, & tamen tacitum diu*

*Crimen biformi partus exhibuit nota;*

*Scelusq; matris arguit vultu truci*

*Ambiguus infans; ille te venter tulit.*

Ph. ——— ——— *Aut quis Cressius*

(e) *Dædalea vasto Claustra mugitu replens*

*Taurus biformis, ore Cornigero ferox*

*Divulsit?*

The *thought* in *Euripides* was good and just enough; but here we have it hall'd, and pull'd, and tost, and tumbl'd about, in all postures and figures, and in all colours but the right. Observe but how *a propos* the *Heroine* first starts it. *No wonder* (says she) *if my love*

goes to the (a) wood, seeing my Mother was gallanted by a Bull; this brings her the ready way to (b) *Dædalus* and the labyrinth, where both she and the Poet are lost together. One might think, it would well enough serve from the Nurses mouth for an (c) use of reproof: till shortly after we find it a (d) *turn-coat*, and muster'd up by *Phedra* in the way of an excuse. The rest are all wide from sense and sobriety, as (e) *the huge bellowings that fill'd the Dedalian Cloysters.*

This may suffice for *Seneca*, and *Phedra*, with whom I had not so long digress'd, but that I had *Panthea* in mine eye all the while. Nor should I have judg'd *Panthea* worth all this ado, but that she has many proper Cousins on the Stage. And these vile characters have so long prosper'd, that they bear high, and are fairly on to pass for excellencies.

But I grow weary of this Tragedy: In the former I took *Latorch* by his mouth, and ranting air for a copy of *Cassius* in *Shakespear*: and that you may see *Arbaces* here, is not without his *Cassian* strokes.

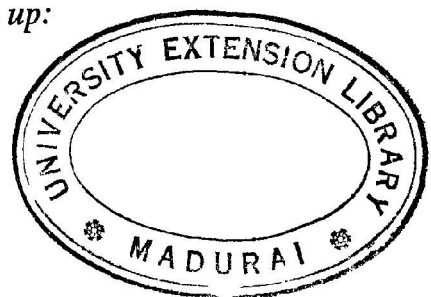
Thus *Cassius* in *Shakespear*.

Cass. — Brutus and Cæsar! what should there be in that Cæsar!  
Why should that name be sounded more than yours?  
Write them together, yours is as fair a name:  
Sound them; it doth become the mouth as well:  
Weigh them, it is as heavy; conjure with them, man:  
Brutus will start a Spirit as well as Cæsar.  
Now, in the name of all the Gods at once,  
Upon what meat doth this our Cæsar feed,  
That he is grown so great?——

<I, ii, 142–50>

Thus *Arbaces*.

Arb. I have liv'd  
To conquer men, and now am overthrown  
Only by words, Brother and Sister; where  
Have those words dwelling? I will find 'em out,  
And utterly destroy 'em: but they are  
Not to be grasp'd: let 'em be men or beasts,  
I will cut 'em from the earth; or Towns,  
And I will raze 'em, and then blow 'em up:



*Let 'em be Seas, and I will drink 'em off,  
And yet have unquench'd fire within my breast:  
Let 'em be any thing but meerly voice. <IV, iv, 116-26>*

Would not these raptures have put Sir *Will. Petty* in mind of the *Irish Inscription*?

FOR FIERCENESS AND FOR FURIOUSNESS,—  
MEN CALL ME THE QUEENS MORTER-PIECE.

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### THE BUSINESS OF THE *MAIDS TRAGEDY* IS THIS;

*Amintor contracted to Aspatia (Callianax's Daughter) by the King's command, marries Evadne, Sister to Melanthius; and expects to lye with her; but the Bride (mincing nothing) flatly tells him that he is but taken for a Cloak; that She, indeed, is a Bedfellow only for the King. The good man is perswaded to dissemble all, till his friend Melanthius extorts from him the secret: and thereupon hectors his Sister Evadne into repentance, and makes her promise to murder the King. Which she effects: in the mean time, by vexing Callianax, Melanthius prevails with him to deliver up the Fort, (wherein consisted the strength of the Kingdom,) and so provides for his own security. Lysimachus, Brother to the murder'd King, succeeds on the Throne, and pardons all. Evadne would now go to bed with her Husband, he refuses, she kills her self. Aspatia in mans habit kicks her Sweetheart Amintor, duels him, and is kill'd; and now Amintor kills himself to follow her: at which sight, his friend Melanthius would also take the same course, but is prevented.*

Here we find *Amintor* false to his Mistress; and this fault is the source of all the revolutions in this Tragedy.

*Amintor* therefore should have named the Tragedy, and some additional title should have hinted the Poet's design.

But seeing the *Maid* comes in at the latter end, only, to be kill'd for company; and seeing the King is the person of greatest importance, is the greatest loser and concern'd in the action of the Play

more than enough. And seeing that the new King *Lysimachus* in the close of the Tragedy makes this sober conclusion, says he;

*May this a fair example be to me,  
To rule with temper: for on lustful Kings  
Unlookt-for sudden deaths from heaven are sent.  
But curst is he that is their instrument.* <V, iv, 296-9>

From these considerations we might gather that the Poets intent was to show the dismal consequences of *fornication*. And if so, then the Title of the Tragedy should have related to the King.

Whil'st thus we are uncertain what ought to be the *title*, we may suspect that the *Action* of the Tragedy is *double*, where there seem two centers, neither can be right; and the lines leading towards them must all be false and confus'd; the *preparation* I mean, and conduct must be all at random, since not directed to any one certain end.

But what ever the Poet design'd; nothing in *History* was ever so *unnatural*, nothing in *Nature* was ever so *improbable*, as we find the whole conduct of this Tragedy, so far are we from any thing accurate, and Philosophical as Poetry requires.

This will appear as we examin the particular actions and Characters apart.

Our Poet here gives to the great Comical Booby *Callianax*, the honour of a long name with a King at th' end on 't, yet lets the King himself go without. But since he must be nameless we may treat him with the greater freedom, and to tell my mind, certainly God never made a King with so little wit, nor the devil with so little grace, as is this King *Anonymus*.

A King of History might marry his Concubine to another man for a Maid; might hinder that man from the enjoyment. But would not then turn them into the bed-chamber to be all night together; nor would come in the morning to interrogate and question him, and torture the soul of him, as we find in this Tragedy, nor would impose it on a husband thus affronted, whom he calls *honest* and *valiant*, to be the pimp to his bride. To have taken *Amintors* head off had been clemency in comparison of these outrages without any cause or colour. And how wise the King was in all this, may be judg'd from his own mouth, finding the husband contented and all

quiet, the King (jealous that *Evadne* had not observ'd covenants) thus taxes her.

*Do not I know the uncontrolled thoughts  
That youth brings with him, when his blood is high  
With expectation and desire of that  
He long had waited for? is not his spirit  
Though he be temperate of a valiant strain,  
As this our age has known? what could he do,  
If such a sudden speech had met his blood,  
But ruine thee for ever? if he had not kill'd thee,  
He could not bear it thus; he is as we.  
Or any other wronged man.* <III, i, 210–19>

As if he had said, you have *Evadne*, you have broken Articles with me; it cannot be otherwise; for had you kept them, flesh and blood could not endure the affront, and he is such a man as would have cut us all to pieces in revenge. The danger being so cleer and certain, and a thousand safe courses before his nose, why should he stumble on this? never was a King of History so errant a fool and madman.

In framing a Character for Tragedy, a Poet is not to leave his reason, and blindly abandon himself to follow fancy; for then his fancy might be monstrous, might be singular and please no body's *maggot* but his own, but reason is to be his guide, reason is common to all people, and can never carry him from what is Natural.

Many are apt to mistake *use* for *nature*, but a Poet is not to be an Historiographer, but a Philosopher, he is not to take *Nature* at the *second hand*, soyl'd and deform'd as it passes in the customes of the unthinking vulgar.

The *\*Phedra* in *Euripides* told us truly that it is *not Natural to do evil when we know good*. Therefore vice can never please unless it be painted and dress'd up in the colours and disguise of vertue, and should any man knowingly and with open eyes prefer what is evil, he must be reckon'd the †greatest of Monsters, and in no wise be lookt on as any image of what is Natural, or what is suitable with humane kind.

\* καὶ μοι δοκοῦσιν οὐ κατὰ γνώμης φύσιν πράσσειν κάκιον.

† ——— *majus est monstro nefas*

*Nam monstra fato, moribus scelera imputes. Sen.*

What is there in the *Heroe*, of Man, or of Nature in these Kings of our Poets framing? And for *Evadne's* part, did Hell ever give reception to such a Monster? or *Cerberus* ever wag his tayl at an impudence so *sacred*?

On the Wedding night the Bridegroom is cajol'd by her in no better terms than.

*Evad. A mayden-head, Amintor, at my years?  
 Alas, Amintor, thinkest thou I forbear  
 To sleep with thee, because I have put on  
 A Mayden strictness; look upon these cheeks  
 And thou shalt find the hot and rising blood  
 Unapt for such a vow; no, in this heart  
 There dwells as much desire, and as much will  
 To put that wish't act in practice, as ever yet  
 Was known to woman, and they have been shown  
 Both; but it was the folly of thy youth,  
 To think this beauty (to what land so e're  
 It shall be call'd) shall stoop to any second.  
 I do enjoy the best, and in that height  
 Have sworn to stand or dye. <II, i, 198-9, 290-302>*

Soon after she tells him.

*Alas I must have one  
 To Father Children, and to bear the name  
 Of husband to me, that my sin may be  
 More honourable. <II, i, 322-5>*

Hitherto she is bashful, after this the *Scene* is to be wrought up, and the next Scene presents her impudence *triumphant*; but I shall trace her duty towards her husband no farther.

Had *Evadne* been the injur'd ladies sister, and had marry'd *Amintor* out of revenge, or had there been any foundation from circumstances for this sort of carriage, the Character then might have been contriv'd plausible enough; but both the Kings behaviour and hers, uncircumstanc'd as we have them, are every way so harsh and against Nature, that every thing said by them strikes like a dagger to the souls of any reasonable *audience*.

Whatever persons enter upon the Stage the Poetry would be gross



enough if the audience could not by the *manners* distinguish in what Country the *Scene* lay; whether in *England*, *Italy*, or *Turky*: more gross would it be if the manners would not discover which were men and which the women.

Now Nature knows nothing in the *manners* which so properly and particularly distinguishes woman as doth her modesty, consonant therefore to our principles and Poetical, is what some writers of Natural History have reported; that women when drowned swim with their faces downwards, though men on the contrary.

Tragedy cannot represent a woman without modesty as natural and essential to her.

If a woman has got any accidental historical impudence, if documented in the School of *Nanna* or *Heloisa*, she is furnish'd with some stock of acquired impudence, she is no longer to stalk in Tragedy on her high shoes; but must rub off and pack down with the Carriers into the *Provence* of Comedy, there to be kickt about and expos'd to laughter.

There are degrees of modesty. *Evadne* and every person feign'd ought to be represented with more modesty then *Phedra* or *Semiramis*, because the History makes it credible that these had less of modesty then Naturally is inherent to the Sex, yet ought these also to show more of modesty then is ordinarily seen in men, that the Characters might still be distinguish'd.

But (of all) the Kings murder is attended with those circumstances, with such a knot of absurdity and injustice, that I well know not where to begin to unravel it.

The King indeed is born a Monster, a Monster of great hopes, and what might we not have expected from him? yet certainly the Poet cuts him off, e're ripe for punishment.

And by such unproper means, that to remove one guilty person he makes an hundred; and commits the *deadly* sins to punish a *venial* one.

If *Amintors* falshood and its fatal consequences are to be noted, what occasion have we for a King in this Tragedy? cannot *Corydon* deceive his *Amarillis* (for such is *Aspatia*) but the King must know of it, the King must be murder'd for't?

To vex this false man, a Groom might have done the job, and

have been the Poets Cuckold-maker to all intents and purposes every jot as well.

If it be said that the King was accessory to the falshood, I question whether in Poetry a King can be an accessory to a crime. If the King commanded *Amintor*; *Amintor* should have begg'd the Kings pardon; should have suffer'd all the racks and tortures a Tyrant could inflict; and from *Perillus's* Bull should have still bellowed out that eternal truth, that his *Promise was to be kept*, that he is true to *Aspatia*, that he dies for his Mistress, then would his memory have been precious and sweet to after-ages; and the Midsummer-Maydens would have *offer'd* their Garlands all at his grave.

And thus the King might kill *Amintor*, but *Amintor* could not pretend that the King or Fortune had made him false.

—*nec si miserum fortuna Sinonem*

*Finxit, vanum etiam mendacemque improba finget.*

Therefore, I say, the King was not to blame; or however not so far, as in any wise to render his life obnoxious.

But if the Poet intended to make an example of this King, and that the King right or wrong must be kill'd, *Amintor* only felt the highest provocations, and he alone should have been drawn out for the wicked instrument, for *Melantius* had no reason to be angry at any but at his Sister *Evadne*; nor could she have any pretence to exercise her hands, unless it were against her self.

If I mistake not, in Poetry no woman is to kill a man, except her quality gives her the advantage above him, nor is a Servant to kill the Master, nor a Private Man, much less a Subject to kill a King, nor on the contrary.

Poetical decency will not suffer death to be dealt to each other by such persons, whom the Laws of Duel allow not to enter the lists together.

There may be circumstances that alter the case, as when there is a sufficient ground of partiality in an *Audience*, either upon the account of *Religion* (as *Rinaldo*, or *Riccardo* in *Tasso* might kill *Soliman*, or any other *Turkish* King or great *Sultan*) or else in favour of our *Country* for then a private *English Heroe* might overcome a King of some Rival Nation.

But grant that *Evadne* lies under none of all these impediments; suppose her duly qualifi'd, and let the King wave his priviledges. Is there in History any president of a *Magdalen* sinner, that meerly from a fit of repentance fell foul on her *Gallant* at this horrid rate. Indeed, amongst 'em, they call him *lustful Thief*, *Devil-King*, *shameless Villain*, &c. the *Athenian* Servants were better bred.

\*ὦ μῶρος, εἰ χρὴ δεσπότας εἰπεῖν τοδε.

*Ah fool; if we may term our Masters so.*

ὄλοιτο μὲν μὴ δεσπότης γάρ ἐστ' ἐμός.

*Death take him! no, he is my Master.*

But I say, what reason is there for all this outcry? What can she lay to the King's charge?

*Thou kept'st me brave at Court, and Whor'd me;*

*Thou marri'd me to a young noble Gentleman,*

*And whor'd me still.*

<V, ii, 94-6>

The *noble Gentleman* indeed is wrong'd: but, good Madam, what reason is there for you to complain? did any force or philter overcome you? was not you as forward? did not you freely and heartily consent? do not we remember your *hot rising blood*,

——Your much desire, and as much will

To put that wish'd act in practise, as ever yet

Was known to Woman?

<II, i, 295-7>

Has the King cast you off? or broken articles? no: but you repent? then repent at home; you may make bold with your own body, and there let fly your rage and violence. For to kill your Lover, is no effect or operation of repentance, nor has any ground in nature or reason: 'tis worse than brutish.

But indeed most of our Murderers hitherto have been no better; they are the Poets Ban-dogs let loose to worry those the Poet had mark'd out for slaughter; and never shew more reason or consideration: and consequently can in no wise occasion either pitty or terror to cause that delight expected from Tragedy.

In *Epick Poetry* enemies are kill'd; and *Mezentius* must be a wicked Tyrant; the better to set off *Æneas's* piety. In Tragedy, all

\* *Euripides.*

the clashing is amongst friends, no *panegyrick* is design'd, nor ought intended but pitty and terror: and consequently no shadow of sense can be pretended for bringing any wicked persons on the Stage. And yet in that *Mezentius* of *Virgil*, we find more vertue than in all the characters I have yet examind; and greater occasion for pitty. We forget all his cruelties, when we see that trouble and infinite passion for his Son *Lausus*, (who was slain in his defence, and whom he would not survive,) which is so admirably exprest.

——*Æstuat ingens*

*Imo in corde pudor, mistoq; insania luctu,  
Et furiis agitatus amor, & conscia virtus, &c.*

Which lines, *Tasso* (who translates the whole passage under the names of *Solimano* and *Amiralto* into his *Gerusalemme*) thus renders in more words, but not with more advantage.

*Ferue in mezzo del cor lo sdegno e l'onta,  
E co'l lutto la rabbia e mista insieme,  
E da le furie l'agitato amore,  
E noto a se medesmo l'empio valore.*

But to return, what yet makes this fact of *Evadne* more unlikely, is, that she should be hector'd into a repentance so pernicious, by her Brother *Melantius*: who is said to be *noble* and *brave*; but from his own mouth we may judg him a *Heroe*, like those we met with formerly; all his words are brags; no *Dangerfield*, nor Captain *Thundergun* could sit neer him. And for his manners, after one King was murder'd by his contrivance, he stands on his guard, and takes up the next King thus roundly.

Mel. *The short is this,  
'Tis no ambition to lift up my self,  
Urges me thus: I do desire again  
To be a Subject, so I may be freed;  
If not, I know my strength, and will unbuild  
This goodly Town; be speedy and be wise  
In a reply.*

<V, iii, 54–60>

And now this new King, Brother to the former, as *heroickly* throws him a *blank*, and bids him make his own terms. His words are these:

Lis. Melanthius, write in that thy choice;

My Seal is at it.

<V, iii, 64–5>

And more to the purpose we find not (in the Tragedy) of this second King; save only when he concludes the Play, and tells us, that he (for his part) will take warning how ever he meddles with a Woman; as before has been cited.

*Callianax* is an old humorous Lord, neither *wise* nor *valiant*, as himself confesses; and yet is entrusted with the strength and keys of the Kingdom: whereas, in Comedy, he would scarce pass for a good Yeoman of the Cellar.

His Daughter, *Aspatia*, that gives name to this Tragedy, makes also here a very simple *figure*. Never did *Amintas* or *Pastor fido* know any thing so tender; nor were the *Arcadian* Hills ever water'd with the tears of a creature so innocent. Pretty Lamb! how mournfully it bleats! it needs no *articulate* voice to move our compassion: it seeks no shades but under the *dismal Yew*; and browses only on *Willow-garlands*: yet it can speak for a kiss or so.

Asp. I'll trouble you no more, yet I will take

A parting kiss, and will not be deny'd.

You'l come, my Lord, and with the Virgins weep

When I am laid in earth; though you your self

Can know no pitty. Thus I wind my self

Into this Willow garland, &c.

<II, i, 119–24>

At this rate of tattle she runs on, and never knows when she has said enough.

This *Aspatia* is a Lord's Daughter, and bred at Court; yet is in the presence, and in the Bed-chamber of the Lady that supplants her, and amongst the Bride-maids, where she acts her part; and fawns upon the perjur'd man that forsakes her. And now cannot I be perswaded that there is ought of nature or probability in all this. Much less would I think this a Woman to handle a Sword, and kick *Amintor*, as we see her do soon after. Nor can I conceive wherein consists that *blessing*, as she calls it; which she propos'd to her self, in being kill'd by his hands. This may be *Romance*, but not *Nature*.

And certainly, of all the characters, this of *Amintor* is the most

unreasonable. No reason appears why he was contracted to *Aspatia*, and less why he forsook her for *Evadne*; and least of all for his dissembling, and bearing so patiently the greatest of provocations that could possibly be given. Certainly no spectacle can be more displeasing, than to see a man ty'd to a post, and another buffetting him with an immoderate tongue. Certainly nothing can please a generous mind better, than that of *Virgil*.

*Parcere subjectis, & debellare superbos.*

Poetry will allow no provocation or injury, where it allows no revenge. And what pleasure can there be in seeing a King threaten and hector without cause; when none may be suffer'd to make a return? Poetry will not permit an affront, where there can be no reparation. But well was it for us all, that *Amintor* was by the Poet his maker, endu'd with a restraining grace, and had his hands ty'd.

The King should first have kill'd his own Mother to have made him mad enough, and fitted him for such a monstrous provocation. And *Amintor* too should have been guilty of some enormous crime, (as he is indeed) that drew this curse upon him, and prepar'd him to receive so horrid an out-rage. Both should have been ripe for punishment, which this occasion pulls down upon them, by making them kill each other. Then *Poetical Justice* might have had its course, though no way could pitty be due to either of them.

But surely this character of *Amintor* is \*inconsistent, and is contradiction all over. He is a man of *Honour*, yet breaks his Faith with his Mistress, bears the greatest of affronts from his Wife that ever was given, and dissembles it. 'Tis true; once or twice he is for singing a *Catch*, for the Fiddle and Dancing; but his countenance is not always set after that copy; he does not always dissemble *scurvily*: for sometimes we have him looking so pleas'd, that Comedy would almost be asham'd of such a Cuckold.

He is also honest, and of unshaken loyalty; yet sometimes has such devilish *throws*, as would afright any true *liege* people from sitting at a Coffee-house near him.

And all the *passions* in him work so awkwardly, as if he had suck'd a Sow. Thus he threatens.

\* ———*Servetur ad imum*  
*Qualis ab incepto processerit, & sibi constet.*



*Am. —Come to my bed, or by those hairs,  
(Which, if thou hadst a Soul like to thy locks,  
Were threads for Kings to wear about their arms:*

*Evad. Why so perhaps they are.)*

*Am. I'll drag thee to my bed.——* <II, i, 277–81>

Should not he rather have kick'd her out of doors? And did ever man huff with such a *parenthesis*?

As the *Scene* and provocations work higher; what *Aspatia* might have said to him, he whines to *Evadne*.

*Am. What a strange thing am I?*

*Evad. A miserable one, one that my self am sorry for.*

*Am. Why shew it then in this,*

*If thou hast pittie, though thy love is none:*

*Kill me, and all true Lovers that shall live*

*In after-ages, crost in their desires,*

*Shall bless thy memory, and call thee good,*

*Because such mercy in thy heart was found*

*To rid a lingring Wretch.* <II, i, 325–33>

*Amintor* lov'd *Aspatia*, and marri'd *Evadne*, only because the King commanded him. We heard nothing of his love to *Evadne* till now, that he is turn'd the amorous *Owf*, when he ought to be all rage and indignation.

When he should be silenc'd, he falls a preaching.

*Am. Oh thou hast nam'd a word that wipes away*

*All thoughts revengeful; in that sacred name*

*The King, there lies a terror; what frail man*

*Dares lift his hand against it; let the gods*

*Speak to him when they please; till then let us suffer and wait.*

<II, i, 313–18>

This is loyal breath; but presently comes a puff that drives us back to the North of *Scotland*.

*Am. —And it is some ease*

*To me in these extremes, that I knew this*

*Before I touch't thee; else had all the sins*

*Of mankind stood betwixt me and the King,*

*I had gone through 'em to his heart and thine.*

<II, i, 348–52>

Oh, says he, 'tis well its no worse, for had I lain with thee, I should have been all fire and fury; I would not have valu'd twenty Kings, but have kill'd 'em all. Well *Amintor*, *de gustibus non est disputandum*, there is difference betwixt men and men; some one, peradventure, of a grosser sense, might have been as cool and well content, if he had been permitted the honour to *touch* for once where his Majesty had toucht before. But now the storm is over, and he proceeds,

*Am. —Give me thy hand,  
Be careful of thy credit, and sin close,  
'Tis all I wish; upon my Chamber-floor  
I'll rest to night, that morning visitors  
May think we did as married people use,  
And prithee smile upon me when they come,  
And seem to toy, as if thou hadst been pleas'd  
With what we did. Evad. Fear not, I will do this.  
Am. Come let us practise, and as wantonly  
As ever loving Bride and Bridegroom met,  
Let's laugh and enter here. Evad. I am content.  
Am. Down all the swellings of my troubled heart.  
When we walk thus entwin'd, let all eyes see,  
If ever Lovers better did agree.*

<II, i, 355–68>

See how he concludes too, to the eternal disgrace of *Rhime*. One might think that a man in his *predicament* should scarce be in a mood to be so very particular, and enlarge thus upon the subject, unless he were well pleas'd with the occasion. Besides, we find here, *Lovers*, *entic'd*, *laugh*, *Bridegroom*, *Bride*, *loving*, *wantonly*, *pleas'd*, *toy*, *prethee*, *did as married people use*; so many pleasant words and pretty, got together, *Longinus* would swear that no man could be angry at heart with all these in his mouth; they ought none of them to be nam'd on the same day with *Evadne*, and the transactions in this *Tragedy*. What I have cited, is only from the *first Scene*, wherein *Amintor* has business; nor would I follow him farther, but that in the third *Act*, betwixt him and *Melantius* we find the first

occasion for a Tragical passion that yet (I think) these *Plays* have afforded us; which arises from the conduct of an Husband who discovers the secret of his Wives dishonour to his Friend her Brother. *Melantius* importunes *Amintor* to tell the cause of his trouble. When the matter comes to be broken, they proceed thus:

Mel. ———*What is it?*

Am. *Why 'tis this,—it is too big*

*To get out, let my tears make way awhile.*

<III, ii, 121–2>

Here I suppose, *Amintor* might better have wept, without telling it to *Melantius*.

Mel. *Punish me strangely Heaven, if he escape  
Of life or fame, that brought this Youth to this.*

Am. *Your Sister.*

Mel. *Well said.*

Am. *You'l wish't unknown, when you have heard it.*

Mel. *No.*

Am. *Is much to blame,*

*And to the King has given her Honour up——*

<III, ii, 123–9>

This line at the full length, is surely enough, his care is, so to mince that matter as not to offend the Brother. Some broken speeches, as *your Sister, the King, her honour*, or the like, with now and then a sprinkling of his tears, might have suffic'd, and the Brother should have been left to guess and paraphrase the broad meaning. But *Amintor* harps upon the same string out of time himself. What follows, is plainly to upbraid and affront his Friend by words, though he intended nothing less; for he goes on:

Am. *And lives in whoredom with him.*

<III, ii, 130>

And what yet is more silly, in the next he adds,

Am. *She's wanton, I am loath to say a whore,*

*Though it be true.*

<III, ii, 134–5>

This provokes *Melantius* to draw his Sword, and he is for fighting *Amintor*; yet I am apt to be of *Amintors* mind, which he thus expresses:

Am. ——— *It was base in you,  
To urge a weighty secret from your Friend,  
And then rage at it.* <III, ii, 167–9>

Yet *Melantius* persists, till *Amintor* is provoked to draw his Sword, and then *Melantius* puts up. *Harlequin* and *Scaramouttio* might do these things. Tragedy suffers 'em not, here is no place for Cowards, nor for giddy fellows, and Bullies with their squabbles. When a Sword is once drawn in Tragedy, the Scabbard may be thrown away; there is no leaving what is once design'd, till it be thoroughly effected. *Iphigenia Taurica* went to sacrifice *Orestes*, and she desisted, why? she discover'd him to be her Brother. None here are such Fools as by words to begin a quarrel; nor of so little resolution, to be talkt agen from it, without some new emergent cause that diverts them. No \*simple alteration of mind ought to produce or hinder any action in a Tragedy.

Yet far more faulty is what follows; the *counter-turn* has no shadow of sense or sobriety. *Melantius* has swaggered away his fury, and now *Amintor* is all agog to be afighting; for what; but to get his secret back again.

Am. ——— *Give it me again,  
Or I will find it wheresoe're it lies  
Hid in the mortall'st part, invent a way to get it back.* <III, ii, 213–16>

Thou art mad, *Amintor*, Bedlam is the only place for thee; if thou comest here with thy madness, Tragedy expects †*ut cum ratione insanias*.

*Hercules* was mad, and kill'd his Wife and Children, yet there was reason in his madness; a mist was cast before his eyes, he mistook them for their enemies, and believ'd he was revenging their quarrel whilst he beat their brains out. That was a madness might move pity; but this of *Amintor* is meerly bruitish, and can move

\* *Arist.*

† *Terence.*

nothing but our aversion. Here is a bluster begun without provocation, and ended without any thing of satisfaction.

But that I may never find a fault without shewing something better. For a quarrel betwixt two friends, with the *turn* and *counter-turn*: let me commend that Scene in the *Iphigenia* in *Aulide*. Where *Agamemnon* having consented that his Daughter should be sacrific'd, and (that her Mother might let her come the more willingly) sent for her with a pretence that she was to be marri'd to *Achilles*; yet in a fit of Fatherly tenderness he privately dispatches Letters to hinder her coming. *Menelaus* meets the Messenger going from *Agamemnon*, suspects the business, takes the Letters from him before *Agamemnon*'s face, and read them; and now arose the contest: *Menelaus* was zealous for the publick good, the more, because it agreed so much with his own interest: and *Agamemnon* had cause enough to stand up for his Daughter; but yet, at length, with weeping eyes, and shame for his weakness and partiality, he yielded up the cause. But *Menelaus* now seeing the conflict of *Agamemnon*, the tears rowling down his cheeks, and his repentance, this sight melted the heart of him, and now he turns Advocate for *Iphigenia*: He will have *Hellen* and the concerns of *Greece* left to the mercy of Heaven, rather than that his Brother *Agamemnon* should do so much violence to himself; and that so vertuous a young Princess be trapan'd to lose her life.

Here all the motions arise from occasions great and just; and this is matter for a *Scene* truly passionate and Tragical.

We may remember (how-ever we find this Scene of *Melanthius* and *Amintor* written in the Book) that at the *Theater* we have a good Scene Acted, there is work cut out, and both our *Æsopus* and *Roscius* are on the Stage together: Whatever defect may be in *Amintor* and *Melanthius*; Mr. *Hart* and Mr. *Mohun* are wanting in nothing. To these we owe for what is pleasing in the Scene; and to this Scene we may impute the success of the *Maids Tragedy*.

The *Drolls* in this *Play* make not so much noise as in the two former; but are less excusable here. In the former they keep some distance, and make a sort of *interlude*: but here they thrust into the principal places; when we should give our full attention to what is Tragedy. When we would listen to a *Lute*, our ears are rapt with the *tintamar* and twang of the *Tongs* and *Jewstrumps*. A man may

be free to make a jest of his own misfortunes: but surely 'tis unnatural and barbarous to laugh when we see another on the Scaffold. Some would laugh to find me mentioning *Sacrifices, Oracles, and Goddesses*: old Superstitions, say they, not practicable, but more than ridiculous on our Stage. These have not observ'd with what Art *Virgil* has manag'd the Gods of *Homer*, nor with what judgment *Tasso* and *Cowley* employ the heavenly powers in a Christian Poem. The like hints from *Sophocles* and *Euripides* might also be improv'd by modern Tragedians; and something thence devis'd suitable to our Faith and Customes. 'Tis the general reason I contend for: Nor would I more have Oracles or Goddesses on the Stage, then hear the persons speak *Greek*, they are Apes and not men that imitate with so little discretion.

Some would blame me for insisting and examining only what is apt to *please*, without a word of what might profit.

1. I believe the end of all Poetry is to *please*.
2. Some sorts of Poetry please without profiting.
3. I am confident whoever writes a Tragedy cannot please but must also profit; 'tis the Physick of the mind that he makes palatable.

And besides the *purging* of the *passions*; something must stick by observing that constant order, that harmony and beauty of Providence, that necessary relation and chain, whereby the causes and the effects, the vertues and rewards, the vices and their punishments are proportion'd and link'd together; how deep and dark soever are laid the Springs, and however intricate and involv'd are their operations.

But these enquiries I leave to men of more flegm and consideration.

*Othello* comes next to hand, but laying my Papers together without more scribbling, I find a volumn, and a greater burthen then I dare well obtrude upon you.

If I blindly wander in erroneous paths, 'tis more then time Mr. *Shepherd* that you set me right, and if I am not so much out of the way; then most of the main faults in these other Tragedies cannot be far from our view, if we tread not on their skirts already.

I will wait your direction e're I advance farther, and be sure of your pardon for what is past. Many seeming contradictions I rather



chose to slip over, then to be ever casting in your way some *parenthesis* or some *distinction*.

Many other slips and mistakes too you meet withall, but *the fortune of Greece depends not on them*.

Nor I know could you (that read Hebrew without the pricks) be at a loss for the sense, where you found not a period truly pointed.

If the Characters I have examin'd are the same I take them for, I send you Monsters enough for one *Bartholemew-fair*: but what would vex a Christian, these are shown us for our own likenesses, these are the *Duch* Pictures of humane kind.

I have thought our Poetry of the last Age as rude as our Architecture, one cause thereof might be, that *Aristotle's treatise of Poetry* has been so little studied amongst us, it was perhaps Commented upon by all the great men in *Italy*, before we well knew (on this side of the *Alps*) that there was such a Book in being. And though *Horace* comprizes all in that small Epistle of his; yet few will think long enough together to be Masters, and to understand the reason of what is deliver'd so in short.

With the remaining *Tragedies* I shall also send you some reflections on that *Paradise lost* of *Miltons*, which some are pleas'd to call a Poem, and assert *Rime* against the slender Sophistry wherewith he attacques it: and also a Narrative of *Petrarch's* Coronation in the *Capitol*, with all the *Pontificalibus* on that occasion, which seems wanting in *Selden*, where he treats on that subject. Let me only anticipate a little in behalf of the *Cataline*, and now tell my thoughts, that though the contrivance and œconomy is faulty enough, yet we there find (besides what is borrow'd from others) more of Poetry and of good thought, more of Nature and of Tragedy, then peradventure can be scrap't together from all those other *Plays*.

Nor can I be displeas'd with honest *Ben*, when he rather chooses to borrow a *Melon* of his Neighbour, than to treat us with a *Pumpion* of his own growth.

But all is submitted to you Men of better sense, by

SIR,

Your most obliged  
humble Servant

T. Rymer.

# EDGAR, OR THE ENGLISH MONARCH; AN HEROICK TRAGEDY

## ADVERTISEMENT

THIS I call an *Heroick Tragedy*, having in it chiefly sought occasions to extoll the *English Monarchy*; and having writ it in that Verse which with *Cowley, Denham, and Waller*, I take to be most proper for Epic Poetry.

The Tragedy ends Prosperously; a sort of Tragedy that rarely succeeds; man being apter to pity the Distressed, then to rejoyce with the Prosperous. Yet this sort seems principally to have pleased *Euripides*; and is necessary here for the Design first above mentioned.

I doubted, indeed, whether Rhyme was proper for Tragedy. Not that I thought it unnaturall; for, questionless, 'tis more naturall to speak in Rhyme, then to speak *English*: this we owe to the Nurse, the former to the Poet. Nor can that be said *unnaturall*, where Nature is help'd and improv'd. But Rhyme is rather sweet, then grave; unless temper'd with so much Thought, and with such Pomp of words, as suits not with that Sorrow and Lamentation which Tragedy ordinarily requires. And therefore, of the two, Rhyme is the more proper for this sort of Tragedy, which ends happily.

The Histories examined, nothing in the Fable can seem Roman-tick or affected. But I must appeal from the late Epitomizers, who make *Edgar* point-blank guilty of *Ethelwold's* Death, without any sufficient ground from Antiquity.

POEMS, &c. ON SEVERAL  
OCCASIONS: WITH VALENTINIAN,  
A TRAGEDY. WRITTEN BY THE  
RIGHT HONOURABLE JOHN LATE  
EARL OF ROCHESTER

THE PREFACE TO THE READER

AMONGST THE ANCIENTS, *Horace* deservedly bears the Name from 'em all, for Occasional *Poems*. Many of which were addressed to *Pollio*, *Mecænas*, and *Augustus*, the greatest Men, and the best Judges, and all his Poetry over-look'd by them. This made him of the Temper not to part with a Piece over hastily; but to bring his Matters to a Review, to cool a little, and think twice before it went out of his Hands.

On the contrary, My Lord *Rochester* was loose from all Discipline of that kind. He found no Body of Quality or Severity so much above himself, to Challenge a Deference, or to Check the ordinary Licenses of Youth, and impose on him the Obligation to copy over again, what on any Occasion had not been so exquisitely design'd.

Nor did he live long enough for Maturity and cool Reflections. He was born (as, in his Life, Dr. *Burnet* tells us) in 1648. and died 1680. At which Age of 32 Years, *Horace* had done no wonders, nor had attain'd to that *Curiosa Fælicitas*, which so fairly distinguish'd him afterwards.

Neither had *Virgil* himself, at that Age, ventur'd out of the Woods, or attempted any thing beyond the *Roundelays* and Conversation of *Damon* and *Amaryllis*.

Nor indeed, when my Lord came to appear in the World, was

*Poetry*, at Court, under any good Aspect, unless it was notably flourish'd with Ribaldry and Debauch: which could not but prove of fatal Consequence to a Wit of his Gentleness and Complaisance.

Far be it from me to insinuate any thing like a Comparison with the Ancients. Only we may observe that no Style or Turn of Thought came in his way that he was not ready to improve. Some thing of *Ovid* he render'd into *English*, which is almost a Verbal Translation that matches the Original. He has Paraphras'd something of *Lucretius* and *Seneca*; and in his Verses on the *Cup*, he gives us *Anacreon* with the same Air and Gaiety: what is added falls in so proper and so easie, one might question whether My Lord *Rochester* imitates *Anacreon*, or *Anacreon* humours My Lord *Rochester*.

The *Satyr upon Man* is commonly taken to be a Translation from *Boileau*. The *French* have ordinarily compar'd their *Ronsards* and their *Malherbes* with *Virgil* and *Horace*; *Boileau* understands better. He has gone farthest to purge out that Chaff and Trifling so familiar in the *French Poetry*, and to settle a Traffick of good Sence amongst them. It may not be amiss to see some Lines of *Boileau* and of My Lord *Rochester* together, on the same Subject.

A Monsieur M——

Docteur de Sorb.

*De tous les Animaux qui s'elevent dans l'Air,  
Qui marchent sur la Terre, ou nagent dans la Mer,  
De Paris, au Perou, du Japon jusqu'à Rome,  
Le plus sot animal, à mon avis, c'est l'homme.  
Quoi', dirat on d'abord, un ver, une fourmi,  
Un insecte rampant qui ne vit qu'à demi,  
Un taureau qui rumine, une cheure qui broute,  
Ont l'Esprit mieux tourné que n'a l'homme? oùi sans doute.  
Ce discours te surprend, Docteur, je l'apperçois:  
L'Homme de la Nature est le Chef & le Roy:  
Bois, Prez, Champs, Animaux, tout est pour son usage;  
Et lui seul a, dis-tu, la raison en partage.  
Il est vrai, de tout temps la raison fut son lot,  
Mais delà je conclus que l'Homme est le plus Sot.*

*In English,*

*By Mr. Oldham.*

*Of all the Creatures in the world that be,  
Beast, Fish, or Fowl, that go, or swim, or fly,  
Throughout the Globe from London, to Japan,  
The arrant'st Fool in my Opinion's Man.  
What (strait I'm taken up) an Ant, a Fly,  
A tiny Mite which we can hardly see  
Without a Perspective, a silly Ass,  
Or freakish Ape? dare you affirm that these  
Have greater Sence than Man? Ay, questionless. }  
Doctor, I find you're shock'd at this discourse;  
Man is, you cry, Lord of the Universe;  
For him was this fair Frame of Nature made,  
And all the Creatures for his Use and Aid;  
To him alone of all the Living kind,  
Has bounteous Heav'n the reas'ning Gift assign'd.  
True, Sir, that Reason always was his Lot;  
But thence I argue Man the greater Sot.*

*By my Lord Rochester, thus,*

*Were I (who, to my Cost, already am,  
One of those strange, prodigious Creatures, Man)  
A spirit, free to chuse for my own share,  
What sort of Flesh and Blood I pleas'd to wear, }  
I'd be a Dog, a Monkey, or a Bear,  
Or any thing, but that vain Animal,  
Who is so proud of being Rational.*

It might vex a patient Reader, shou'd I go about very minutely to shew the Difference here betwixt these two Authors; 'tis sufficient to set them together. My Lord *Rochester* gives us another Cast of Thought, another Turn of Expression, a strength, a Spirit, and Manly Vigour, which the *French* are utter strangers to. Whatever Giant *Boileau* may be in his own Country, He seems little more than a Man of Straw with my Lord *Rochester*.

What the former had expounded in a long-winded Circumfer-

ence of Fourteen Lines, is here most happily express'd within half the Compass. What work might that single Couplet [*A Spirit free, &c.*] make for one that loves to dilate? some able Commentator wou'd hammer out of it all *Plato, St. Origen, and Virgil* too, in to the Bargain.

Whatsoever he imitated or Translated, was Loss to him. He had a Treasure of his own; a Mine not to be exhausted. His own Oar and Thoughts were rich and fine: his own Stamp and Expression more neat and beautiful than any he cou'd borrow or fetch from abroad.

No Imagination cou'd bound or prescribe whither his Flights would carry him: were the Subject light, you find him a Philosopher, grave and profound, to wonder: Were the Subject lumpish and heavy, then wou'd his Mercury dissolve all into Gaity and Diversion. You wou'd take his *Monkey* for a Man of *Metaphysicks*; and his *Gondibert* he sends with all that Grimace to *demolish Windows*, or do some, the like *Important Mischief*.

But, after all, what must be done for the Fair Sex? They confess a delicious Garden, but are told that *Venus* has her share in the Ornamental part and Imagery. They are afraid of some *Cupid*, that levels at the next tender Dame that stands fair in the way; and must not expect a *Diana* or *Hippolytus* on every Pedestal.

For this matter the *Publisher* assures us, he had been diligent out of Measure, and has taken exceeding Care that every Block of Offence shou'd be removed.

So that this Book is a Collection of such Pieces only, as may be received in a vertuous Court, and not unbecome the Cabinet of the Severest Matron.



# A SHORT VIEW OF TRAGEDY; IT'S ORIGINAL, EXCELLENCY, AND CORRUPTION. WITH SOME REFLECTIONS ON SHAKESPEAR, AND OTHER PRACTITIONERS FOR THE STAGE

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE CHARLES,

Earl of *Dorset* and *Middlesex*, Baron *Buckhurst*, and *Ld. Chamberlain* of their Majesties Household, *Kt.* of the Most Noble Order of the *Garter*, Lord Lieutenant of *Sussex*, and one of their Majesties most Honourable *Privy Council*.

*My Lord,*

Contemplation and Action have their different Seasons. It was after the defeat of *Antony*, and the business of the World pretty well over, when *Virgil* and *Horace* came to be so distinguish'd at Court.

*Alexander*, who had given so good proof of his Judgment by the Honours paid to the Memory of *Homer*, and of *Pindar*, found in his time no better Poet than *Chærilus*. *Chærilus* to the great *Alexander*, was for *Laureate* and *Historiographer*.

When once again the business of the World is over, Now my Lord, that the *Muses* Commonweal is become your Province, what may we not expect? This I say, not with intent to apply that of *Quintilian* on *Augustus Cæsar*, *Parum Diis visum est esse eum Maximum Poetarum*: that were a Common Topick: But because, when some years ago, I tryed the Publick with Observations concerning the Stage; It was principally your Countenance that buoy'd

me up, and supported a Righteous Cause against the Prejudice and Corruption then reigning.

I would not raise up again the Spirit of the late Prince of *Conti*; his *Traite contre la Comedie*, has by others been termed *la defense de la vertu*. My zeal goes no higher than the Doctrine of *Horace*, and *Aristotle*; and the Primitive Fathers of *Dramatick Poetry*: If that Purity may be Allow'd under a Christian Dispensation.

The World, surely, other Matters apart, owes much to Cardinal *Richelieu*, for his Encouragement to the *Belles Lettres*. From thence we may reckon, that we begin to understand the Epick Poem by the means of *Bossu*; and Tragedy by Monsieur *Dacier*. The World is not agreed which is the Nobler Poem: *Plato* and *Bossu* prefer the former; *Aristotle* and *Dacier* declare for Tragedy. Three, indeed, of the Epick (the two by *Homer* and *Virgil's Æneids*) are reckon'd in the degree of Perfection: But amongst the Tragedies, only the *Oedipus* of *Sophocles*. That, by *Corneille*, and by others of a Modern Cut, *quantum Mutatus!* but I already trespass too long upon your time, who am,

My Lord,  
Your ever Bounden Faithful  
Humble Servant.

## CHAP. I

### The CONTENTS

*The Chorus keeps the Poet to Rules. A show to the Spectators. Two Senses to be pleased. The Eye, by the Show, and by the Action. Plays Acted without Words. Words often better out of the way. Instances in Shakespear. Ben. Johnson and Seneca Noted. To the Ear, Pronunciation is all in all. The Story of Demosthenes. Mistakes in Judging. Two sorts of Judges. At Athens a Third sort. Judges upon Oath. In France Judges divided about the Cid. Cardinal Richelieu against the Majority. At the Thomas Morus, weeping unawares. Horace Angry with Shows. The French Opera inconsistent with Nature and Good sense. Burlesk Verse. At Paris Christ's Passion in Burlesk. A Tragedy of Aeschylus. The defeat of Xerxes. The Subject, and Oeconomy. How imitated for our English Stage. King John of France, Francis I. Prisoners. The Spanish Armado in 88. An imitation, recommended to Mr. Dreyden.*

What Reformation may not we expect now, that in *France* they see the necessity of a *Chorus* to their Tragedies? *Boyer*, and *Racine*, both of the Royal Academy, have led the Dance; they have tried the success in the last Plays that were Presented by them.

The *Chorus* was the root and original, and is certainly always the most necessary part of Tragedy.

The *Spectators* thereby are secured, that their Poet shall not juggle, or put upon them in the matter of *Place*, and *Time*, other than is just and reasonable for the representation.

And the *Poet* has this benefit; the *Chorus* is a goodly *Show*, so that he need not ramble from his Subject out of his Wits for some foreign Toy or Hobby-horse, to humor the Multitude.

\**Aristotle* tells us of *Two Senses* that must be pleas'd, our *Sight*, and our *Ears*: And it is in vain for a *Poet* (with *Bays* in the Rehearsal) to complain of Injustice, and the wrong Judgment in his *Audience*, unless these *Two senses* be gratified.

The worst on it is, that most People are wholly led by these *Two senses*, and follow them upon content, without ever troubling their Noddle farther.

How many Plays owe all their success to a rare *Show*? Even in the days of *Horace*, enter on the Stage a Person in a *Costly strange Habit*, Lord! *What Clapping, what Noise* and Thunder, as Heaven and Earth were coming together! yet not one word spoken.

*Dixit adhuc aliquid? nil, sane, quid placit Ergo?*  
*Lana Terentino violas imitata veneno.*

Was there ought said? troth, no, What then did touch ye?  
Some Prince of *Bantham*, or a *Mamamouche*.

It matters not whether there be any *Plot*, any *Characters*, any *Sense*, or a wise *Word* from one end to the other, provided in our Play we have the *Senate of Rome*, the *Venetian Senate* in their *Pontificalibus*, or a *Blackamoor Ruffian*, or *Tom Dove*, or other Four-leg'd Hero of the Bear-Garden.

The *Eye* is a quick sense, will be in with our Fancy, and prepossess the Head strangely. Another means whereby the *Eye* misleads our Judgment is the *Action*: We go to see a Play *Acted*; in Tragedy is represented a Memorable *Action*; so the Spectators are always pleas'd to see *Action*, and are not often so ill-natur'd to pry into, and examine whether it be Proper, Just, Natural, in season, or out of season. *Bays* in the Rehearsal well knew this secret: The *Two Kings* are at their *Coranto*; nay, the *Moon and the Earth* dance the *Hey*; any thing in Nature, or against Nature, rather than allow the *Serious Council*, or other dull business to interrupt, or obstruct *Action*.

This thing of *Action* finds the blindside of humane-kind an hundred ways. We laugh and weep with those that laugh or weep; we gape, stretch, and are very *dotterels* by example.

*Action* is speaking to the Eyes; and all *Europe* over Plays have

been represented with great applause, in a Tongue unknown, and sometimes without any Language at all.

Many, peradventure, of the Tragical Scenes in *Shakespear*, cry'd up for the *Action*, might do yet better without words: Words are a sort of heavy baggage, that were better out of the way, at the push of Action; especially in his *bombast Circumstance*, where the Words and Action are seldom akin, generally are inconsistent, at cross purposes, embarrass or destroy each other; yet to those who take not the words distinctly, there may be something in the buz and sound, that like a drone to a Bagpipe may serve to set off the *Action*: For an instance of the former, Would not a rap at the door better express *Jago's* meaning? than

——*Call aloud.*

*Jago. Do with like timerous accent, and dire yel,  
As when by night and negligence the fire  
Is spied in populous Cities.*

<I, i, 75–8>

For, What Ship? Who is Arrived? The Answer is,

*'Tis one Jago, Auncient to the General,  
He has had most Favourable and Happy speed;  
Tempests themselves, high Seas, and howling Winds,  
The guttered Rocks, and congregated Sands,  
Traytors ensteep'd, to clog the guiltless Keel,  
As having sense of Beauty, do omit  
Their common Natures, letting go safely by  
The divine Desdemona.*

<II, i, 66–73>

Is this the Language of the Exchange, or the Ensuring-Office? Once in a man's life, he might be content at *Bedlam* to hear such a rapture. In a Play one should speak like a man of business, his speech must be Πολιτικός, which the *French* render *Agissante*; the *Italians*, *Negotiosa*, and *Operativa*; but by this Gentleman's talk one may well guess he has nothing to do. And he has many Companions, that are

——*Hey dey!*

*I know not what to do, nor what to say.\**

\* Rehearsal.

It was then a strange imagination in *Ben. Johnson*, to go stuff out a Play with *Tully's* Orations. And in *Seneca*, to think his dry Morals, and a tedious train of Sentences might do feats, or have any wonderful operation in the *Drama*.

Some go to *see*, others to *hear* a Play. The Poet should please both; but be sure that the *Spectators* be satisfied, whatever Entertainment he give his *Audience*.

But if neither the *Show*, nor the *Action* cheats us, there remains still a notable vehicle to carry off nonsense, which is the *Pronunciation*.

*By the loud Trumpet, which our Courage aids;  
We learn, That sound, as well as sense perswades.\**

*Demosthenes*† had a good stock of Sense, was a great Master of Words; could turn a period, and draw up his tropes in a line of Battel; and fain would he have seen some effect of his Orations; no body was mov'd, no body minded him. He goes to the Playhouse, bargains with an Actor, and learn'd of him to speak Roundly and Gracefully: From that time, Who but *Demosthenes*? Never such a leading man! whenever he spake, no division, not a vote to the contrary, the whole House were with him, *Nemine Contradicente*. This change observ'd, a Friend went to him for the secret; Tell me, says he, your *Nostrum*, tell me your Receipt; What is the main Ingredient that makes an Orator? *Demosthenes* answered, *Pronunciation*: What then the next thing? *Pronunciation*: Pray, then, What the Third? Still the answer was *Pronunciation*.

Now this was at *Athens*, where want of Wit was never an objection against them. So that it is not in *Song* only, that a *good voice* diverts us from the Wit and Sense. From the Stage, the Bar or the Pulpit, a *good voice* will prepossess our ears, and having seized that Pass, is in a fair way to surprise our Judgment.

Considering then what power the *Show*, the *Action*, and the *Pronunciation* have over us, it is no wonder that wise men often mistake, and give an hasty Judgment, which upon a review is justly set aside.

*Horace* divides the *Judges* into *Majores Numero*, and the few or *better sort*; and these for the most part were of different Judg-

\* Waller.

† Plutarch, *Demosthenes*.



ments: The like distinction may hold in all other Nations; only at *Athens* there was a third sort, who were Judges upon \*Oath, Judges in Commission, by the Government sworn to do right, and determine the Merits of a Play, without favour or affection.

But amongst the Moderns, never was a Cause canvass'd with so much heat, between the Play-Judges, as that in *France*, about *Corneille's* Tragedy of the *Cid*. The Majority were so fond of it, that with them it became a Proverb, †*Cela est plus beau que la Cid*. On the other side, Cardinal *Richelieu* damn'd it, and said, *All the pudder about it, was only between the ignorant people, and the men of judgment.*

Yet this Cardinal with so nice a taste, had not many years before been several times to see acted the Tragedy of Sir *Thomas Moor*, and as often wept at the Representation. Never were known so many people‡ crowded to death, as at that Play. Yet was it the Manufacture of *Jehan de Serre*, one about the form of our *Flecko*, or *Thomas Jordan*. The same *de Serre*, that dedicated a Book of Meditations to K. *Charles I.* and went home with Pockets full of Medals and Reward.

By this Instance we see a man the most sharp, and of the greatest penetration was imposed upon by these cheating Sences, the Eyes and the Ears, which greedily took in the impression from the *Show*, the *Action*, and from the Emphasis and *Pronunciation*; tho there was no great matter of *Fable*, no *Manners*, no fine *Thoughts*, no *Language*; that is, nothing of a Tragedy, nothing of a Poet all the while.

*Horace* was very angry with these empty *Shows* and *Vanity*, which the Gentlemen of his time ran like mad after.

——*Insanos oculos, et gaudia vana.*

What would he have said to the *French Opera* of late so much in vogue? There it is for you to bewitch your *eyes*, and to charm your *ears*. There is a Cup of Enchantment, there is Musick and Machine; *Circe* and *Calipso* in conspiracy against Nature and good Sense. 'Tis a Debauch the most insinuating, and the most pernicious; none would think an *Opera* and Civil Reason, should be the growth of one and the same Climate. But shall we wonder at any

\* Plutarch, *Cimon*.

† Pelisson, *Hist Acad.*

‡ *Parnasse Reform.*

thing for a Sacrifice to the *Grand Monarch*? such Worship, such Idol. All flattery to him is insipid, unless it be prodigious: Nothing reasonable, or within compass can come near the Matter. All must be monstrous, enormous, and outrageous to Nature, to be like him, or give any Eccho on his Appetite.

Were *Rabelais* alive again, he would look on his *Gargantua* as but a Pygmy.

\*—*The Heroes Race excels the Poets Thought.*

The Academy Royal may pack up their Modes and Methods, & *pensees ingenieuses*; the *Racines* and the *Corneilles* must all now dance to the Tune of *Baptista*. Here is the *Opera*; here is *Machine* and *Baptista*, farewell *Apollo* and the Muses!

Away with your *Opera* from the Theatre, better had they become the *Heathen* Temples; for the *Corybantian Priests*, and (*Semiviros Gallos*) the old *Capons* of *Gaul*, than a People that pretend from *Charlemayn*, or descend from the undoubted *Loyns* of *Germain* and *Norman* Conquerors.

In the *French*, not many years before was observed the like vicious appetite, and immoderate Passion for *vers Burlesque*.

They were currant in *Italy* an hundred years, ere they passed to this side the *Alps*; But when once they had their turn in *France*, so right to their humour, they over-ran all; †nothing wise or sober might stand in their way. All were possessed with the Spirit of *Burlesk*, from *Doll* in the Dairy, to the Matrons at Court, and Maids of Honour. Nay, so far went the Frenzy, that no Bookseller wou'd meddle on any terms without *Burlesk*; insomuch that *Ann.* 1649. was at *Paris* printed a serious Treatise with this Title,

——*La Passion de Nostre Seigneur, En vers Burlesques.*

If we cannot rise to the Perfection of intreigue in *Sophocles*, let us sit down with the honesty and simplicity of the first beginners in Tragedy: As for example;

One of the most simple now extant, is the *Persians* by *Aeschylus*.

Some ten years after that *Darius* had been beaten by the Greeks, *Xerxes* (his Father *Darius* being dead) brought against them such Forces by Sea and Land, the like never known in History: *Xerxes*

\* Waller.

† *Pelisson Histor. Acad.*

went also in person, with all the Maison de Roy, Satrapie, and Gendarmery; all were routed. Some forty years afterwards the Poet takes hence his subject for a Tragedy.

*The Place is Darius's Tomb, in the Metropolis of Persia.*

*The Time is the Night, an hour or two before day break.*

*First, on the Stage are seen 15 Persons in Robes, proper for the Satrapa, or Chief Princes in Persia: Suppose they met so early at the Tomb, then sacred, and ordinarily resorted to by people troubled in mind, on the accounts of Dreams, or any thing not boding good. They talk of the state of Affairs: Of Greece; and of the Expedition. After some time take upon them to be the Chorus.*

*The next on the Stage comes Atossa the Queen Mother of Persia; she cou'd not lie in Bed for a Dream that troubled her; so in a fit of Devotion comes to her Husband's Tomb, there luckily meets with so many Wise-men and Counsellors to ease her Mind by interpreting her Dream; This with the Chorus makes the Second Act.*

*After this, their Disorder, Lamentation and Wailing, is such, that Darius is disturbed in his Tomb, so his Ghost appears, and be-like stays with them till Day-break: Then the Chorus concludes the Act.*

*In the Fourth Act come the Messengers with sad Tidings, which, with the reflections and troubles thereupon, and the Chorus, fill out this Act.*

*In the Last, Xerxes himself arrives, which gives occasion of condoling, houling, and distraction enough, to the end of the Tragedy.*

One may imagine how a Grecian Audience that lov'd their Countrey, and glory'd in the Vertue of their Ancestors wou'd be affected with this Representation.

Never appeared on the Stage a Ghost of greater consequence. The Grand Monarch Darius, who had been so shamefully beaten by those petty Provinces of the United Grecians, could not now lye quiet in his Grave for them; but must be raised from the dead again, to be witness of his Son's Disgrace, and of their Triumph.

Were a Tragedy after this Model to be drawn for our Stage, Greece and Persia are too far from us: The Scene must be laid nearer home: As at the Louvre; and instead of Xerxes we might take John, King of France, and the Battel of Poictiers. So if the

*Germans or Spaniards* were to compose a Play, on the Battel of *Pavia*, and King *Francis* there taken Prisoner, the Scene shou'd not be laid at *Vienna*, or at *Madrid*, but at the *Louvre*. For there the Tragedy wou'd principally operate, and there all the Lines most naturally centre.

But perhaps the memorable Adventure of the *Spaniards* in 88. against England, may better resemble that of *Xerxes*: Suppose then a Tragedy call'd *The Invincible Armado*.

*The Place, then for the Action, may be at Madrid, by some Tomb, or solemn place of resort; or if we prefer a Turn in it from good to bad Fortune, then some Drawing-Room in the Palace near the King's Bed-chamber.*

*The Time to begin, Twelve at Night.*

*The Scene opening presents 15 Grandees of Spain, with their most solemn Beards and Accoutrements, met there (suppose) after some Ball, or other publick occasion. They talk of the state of Affairs, the greatness of their Power, the vastness of their Dominions, and prospect to be infallibly, ere long, Lords of all. With this prosperity and goodly thoughts transported, they at last form themselves into the Chorus, and walk such measures, with Musick, as may become the gravity of such a Chorus.*

*Then enter two or three of the Cabinet Council, who now have leave to tell the Secret; That the Preparations and the Invincible Armado was to conquer England. These, with part of the Chorus, may communicate all the Particulars, the Provisions, and the Strength by Sea and Land; the certainty of success, the Advantages by that accession; and the many Tun of Tar-Barrels for the Here-ticks. These Topicks may afford matter enough, with the Chorus, for the Second Act.*

*In the Third Act, these Gentlemen of the Cabinet cannot agree about sharing the Preferments of England, and a mighty broil there is amongst them. One will not be content unless he is King of Man; another will be Duke of Lancaster. One, that had seen a Coronation in England, will by all means be Duke of Aquitayn, or else Duke of Normandy. And on this occasion two Competitors have a juster occasion to work up, and shew the Muscles of their Passion, then *Shakespear's Cassius and Brutus*. After, the Chorus.*

*The Fourth Act may, instead of Atossa, present some old Dames of the Court, us'd to dream Dreams, and to see Sprights, in their*

*Night-Rails, and Forhead-Cloaths, to alarm our Gentlemen with new apprehensions, which make distraction and disorders sufficient to furnish out this Act.*

*In the last Act the King enters, and wisely discourses against Dreams and Hobgoblins, to quiet their minds: And the more to satisfie them, and take off their fright, he lets them to know that St. Loyola had appeared to him, and assured him that all is well. This said, comes a Messenger of the ill News; his Account is lame, suspected, he sent to Prison. A second Messenger, that came away long after, but had a speedier Passage, his account is distinct, and all their loss credited. So in fine, one of the Chorus concludes with that of Euripides: Thus you see the Gods bring things to pass often, otherwise than was by man proposed.*

In this Draught we see the Fable, and the Characters or Manners of *Spaniards*, and room for fine Thoughts, and noble Expressions, as much as the Poet can afford.

The First Act gives a Review, or Ostentation of their Strength in Battel-array.

In the Second, they are in motion for the Attack, and we see where the Action falls.

In the Third they quarrel about dividing the Spoil.

In the Fourth, They meet with a Repulse; are beaten off by a Vanguard of Dreams, Goblins, and Terrors of the Night.

In the Fifth, They rally under their King in Person, and make good their Ground, till overpowered by fresh Troops of Conviction; and mighty Truth prevails.

For the First Act, a Painter would draw *Spain* hovering, and ready to strike at the Universe.

In the Second, just taking *England* in her Pounces.

But it must not be forgotten in the Second Act, that there be some *Spanish-Fryar* or *Jesuit*, as *St. Xaviere* (for he may drop in by miracle, any where) to ring in their ears *the Northern Heresie*; like *Jago* in *Shakespear*, *Put Money in thy Purse*, I say, *Put Money in thy Purse*. So often may he repeat *the Northern Heresie*. Away with your Secular Advantages; I say, *the Northern Heresie*; there is Roast-meat for the Church; *Voto a Christo, the Northern Heresie*.

If Mr. *Dryden* might try his Pen on this Subject, doubtless, to an Audience that heartily love their Countrey, and glory in the Ver-

tue of their Ancestors, his imitation of *Æschylus* would have better success, and would *Pit, Box, and Gallery*, far beyond any thing now in possession of the Stage, however wrought up by the unimitable *Shakespear*.

## CHAP. II

### THE CONTENTS

*Tragedy before Thespis. A Religious Worship: Musick and Dance follow the Chorus: Governments care of the Stage, as of Religion. No Private Person to build a Chappel. Young men not to present Plays. Didascalía, and Tragedy-doctors. Difficulty. Publick Revenue for Plays. Theatre-money sacred. End of Poetry. What effect by Aeschylus. Of his Persians. Schools for Boys. Stage for Men. Character of Aristophanes. Opinion of the Persian Ambassador. The State takes aim from him. Spares not his Master the People. Democratical Corruption. His Address unimitable. Comedy after him dwindles. Somewhat like him amongst the Moderns. Rehearsal. Alchymist. Vertuoso. Rabilais.*

*End of Poetry with the Romans. Tragedies by their Great Men. All Translation. Numa Pompilius. Old Romans aversion to Poetry. 12 Tables. Stage-Plays to remove the Plague. Never improv'd by them. The use hardly known. Far short of the Greeks. Horace and Virgil. Their Conduct. Terence's Complaint. Wanted Show. And Action. Athens the Soil for Dramatick Poetry. A forreign Plant with the Romans. They for the Eye, pleas'd more with the outside. Their Theatres considerable, not the Tragedies. Horace's Reason.*

Authors generally look no higher than *Thespis* for the Original of *Tragedy*; yet *Plato* reckons it much ancients.

*Minos*, \*says he, for all his wisdom, was overseen in making war upon *Athens*; where lived so many Tragick Poets, that represented him, and fixed on him and his Family a Name and Character never to be wiped off.

\* *Minos dial.*



The *Judges of Hell*, *Pasiphae*, and her *Minotaur*, are upon record to all Posterity.

All agree, that in the beginning it was purely a Religious *Worship*, and solemn Service for their *Holy-days*. Afterwards it came from the *Temples* to the *Theatre*, admitted of a Secular Allay, and grew to be some Image of the World, and Humane Life. When it was brought to the utmost perfection by *Sophocles*, the *Chorus* continued a necessary part of the *Tragedy*; but the Musick and the Dancing which came along with the *Chorus*, were meer Religion, were no part of the *Tragedy*, nor had any thing of Philosophy or Instruction in them.

The *Government* had the same care of these Representations, as of their Religion, and as much caution about them. The Laws would not permit a private person to make a Chappel, raise an Altar, or consecrate an Image; otherwise all places would in time be so cramm'd from the Devotion of Women and weak heads, that a man should not set a foot, nor find elbow-room, for Gods, and Shrines, consecrated stuff.

The like providence had they for the *Theatre*. No \**Poet* under the age of 30 or 40 years was allow'd to present any Play to be acted. *Seldens* *Marmora*, and other Chronologers inform us that *Aeschylus* had the victory, when he was 40 years old: And *Euripides* not till he was 43. The dramatick Poet was styled *Comædodidascalus*, and *Tragædodidasculus*, as one should say, *Comedy-doctor*, and *Tragedy-doctor*: We find too the Word *didascalia*, with the Titles of *Terence's* Comedies, which afterwards the *Latins* came to imitate, as *Cicero* in *Brut. Livius qui primus fabulam Docuit*, And *Hor.*——*vel qui Docuere Togates*. So to write a Play, in the opinion of *Aristophanes*, *Comodo-didascalia*, is of all things the most difficult.

More †of their publick money was spent about the *Chorus*, and other charges and decorations of their Theatre, than in all their Wars with the Kings of *Persia*.

And when brought to their last extremity, that no other Bank remain'd for them, wherewith to carry on a War, without which War they could not longer expect to be a People, the delicate turn us'd by *Demosthenes*, in starting the motion, for applying this

\* *Schol. Aristo.*

† *Demitr. Libanius.*

*Theatre-money* to the War, is observ'd as a \*Masterpiece of address by the Orators. *Did I say* (quoth *Demosthenes*) *the Theatre-money may be applied to the War? no, by Jove, not I.*

Monasteries and Church Lands were never with us so sacred.

In the days of *Aristophanes*, it was on all hands agreed, that the best *Poet* was he who had done the most to make men vertuous and serviceable to the Publick. *In a Dialogue of the dead*, †where they dispute the precedence, says *Aeschylus*, *Consider what sort of men I left you.*

*Men generous, four Cubits high, not such as now-a-days,  
That slip the collar when they should serve their Countrey.  
Indifferent, loose ‡prudential, §stricking Fellows;  
Nought did they breathe, but broad Swords, Battle-Axes,  
The Helmets lofty pride, ||Jack-Boots, Habergeons,  
With true ¶Beef-courage.*

So when his *Princes at Thebes*, and when his *Persians* were acted, not a Spectator, but bit his Thumbs with impatience for the Field, to give the Enemy Battel. So his *Patroclus*, his *Teucer*, and his *Thimaleon's* were represented only to spur on his Countrey-men to Vertue, and provoke them to a generous Emulation.

And here *Aristophanes* declares another Rule (which *Plato* takes from him) That if any thing looks with an ill face, the Poet must hide it; not suffer it, by any means, to be shown or represented in a Play: Because as the Schools are for teaching Children, the Stage should be for men of riper years and Judgment. So that a *Poet* must be sure that his *Doctrine* be good and wholesome.

This Author appears in his Function, a man of wonderful zeal for Vertue, and the good of his Countrey; and he laid about him with an undaunted resolution, as it were some Christian Martyr, for his Faith and Religion. He plainly *ran a Muck* at all manner of Vice where-ever he saw it, be it in the greatest Philosophers, the greatest Poets, the Generals, or the Ministers of State.

The *Persian* Ambassador, who was Lieger there (as formerly the *French* with us) seeing the Town all at his beck; and the Government taking aim, turning out, disgracing, impeaching, banishing,

\* *Olyn.* 1.  
|| *κνημίδας*

† *Aristoph. Frogs.*  
¶ *θυμὸς ἐπταβοεῖους.*

‡ *Κοβάλους*

§ *Πανούργους*

out-lawing and attainting the great men, according as he hinted, or held up the finger, the Ambassador, not understanding the *Athenian* temper, was astonish'd at the man.

And, for all the Democracy, no less bold was he with his Sovereign, Legislative-people: Representing \*them, taking Bribes, selling their Votes, bought off; Nay, the *whole House led away for †a Dish of Sprats, or penny-worth of Coriander.*

—ὥστε βουλὴν ὄλην  
ὁβολοῦ κοριάννοις ἀναλαβὼν ἐλήλυθα.

He tells 'em (as the practice amongst them) that the Government had no occasion for men of wit or honesty. The most ignorant, the most impudent, and the greatest Rogue stood fairest always for a Place, and the best qualified to be their chief Minister. He tells them, nothing shall fright him; Truth and Honesty are on his side; he has *the heart of Hercules*, will speak what is just and generous, tho *Cerberus*, and all the kennel of Hell-hounds were loos'd upon him.

But then his Address was admirable: He would make the Truth visible and palpable, and every way sensible to them. The Art and the Application; his strange Fetches, his lucky Starts; his odd Inventions, the wild Turns, Returns, and Counter-turns were never match'd, nor are ever to be reached again.

Who follow'd him in Comedy were content to trifle with the Punks, the Pandars, the Ruffian, the old Chuff, the *Davus* or Knave of the Family, and his young Master.

Amongst the Moderns, our *Rehearsal* is some resemblance of his *Frogs*: the *Vertuoso's* Character, and *Ben Johnson's Alchymist* give some shadow of his *Clouds*; but nowhere, peradventure wanders so much of his Spirit, as in the *French Rabelais*.

We may trust *Horace* for the sence of the *Latins*, at the time when they were best able to judge. Then they reckon'd, as the *Greeks* had done, that the *End of Poetry* was as well to be profitable, as to be pleasant.

—*Simul & jucunda, & idonea dicere Vitæ.*

But what their practice, or how they improv'd the *drama*, we see not. They tell of an *Oedipus*, written by *Julius Cæsar*; an *Alcmæon*,

\* *Aristoph. equites.*

† *Περὶ ἀφύων.*

by *Catullus*; a *Thyestes* by *Gracchus*; an *Adrastus*, and an *Ajax* by *Augustus Cæsar*; an *Astyonax*, by *Rutilius*; a *Medea* by *Mecænas*; a *Medea* by *Ovid*: with *Seneca's Medea* too. The Names of these several Tragedies import, that these great men were content to translate from the *Greek*, no farther then had their ambition carried them. *Horace* says, indeed,

*Non minimum meruere decus vestigia Græca.  
Ausi deserere, & Celebrare domestica facta.*

We find the name of *Octavia* by *Mecænas*; and *Diomedes* Instances in the *Brutus*, the *Decius*, and the *Marcellus*, for *Fables* of the *Roman Garb*; but we know no farther of them, what success they had, nor how nobly they perform'd what they had so boldly undertaken, in writing alone, without a *Greek Copy* before 'em. It seems but a faint Commendation (the *Non minimum*) that *Horace* gives them.

The *Romans* were a rougher sort of People; and wonderful jealous were they of the *Grecian Arts*, or of any Commerce with a Politer Nation. Till *Numa Pompilius*, very little had they of either Religion or Poetry amongst them. Nor made he use of it farther, than for the *Hymns*, and *Anthems* at the Altars and Sacrifice: *Secular Poetry* had they none. And indeed at that time it was hardly safe for Poetry to stir from Sanctuary; for in the world, the rigid Fathers had given the *Poets* an ugly name, calling them *Grassatores*; which in Modern *Italian* may be rendred *Banditi*.

It was with much ado, and under an Usurpation by the *Decemvirat*, that they stooped to a correspondence with *Greece*, for the commodity of their Laws; which were not till then imported; and from thence we hear of the Twelve Tables.

For the \**Stage-Plays*: It was a Plague that first introduced them. They try, by that strange Worship, to appease their Gods; and avert the Judgment so heavy on them. But their first *Secular Plays* were taught by *Livius Andronicus*, some 200 years after the Twelve Tables at *Rome*. He set up for some skill in this *Dramatick* way, *Translating* from the *Greek*.

Nor did *Plautus* that followed him attempt any farther, than to *Translate*: yet carried he the *Drama* beyond what any *Roman* since could pretend to. He *Translates* indeed, but with that spirit and

\* *Livy*. l. 7.

mastery, one might take him for an Original; did we not always find the *Scene* at *Athens*; and all the pother is some little jilting story, or knavish pranck: Proposing only some trifling silly Mirth or Pastime.

He had not the courage to trace *Aristophanes*, He had not an *Heart of Hercules*, to combat Vice. Perhaps in his time, they had not yet learn'd to make their *Doctrine* profitable; for he commends one for a rarity.

*Hujusmodi paucas poetæ reperiunt Comœdias  
Ubi boni Meliores fiant.*

After all the goodly commendations and pretty things, by *Quintilian*\* acknowledged due to *Plautus*, and *Terence*, frankly he concludes, in *Comœdia maxime Claudicamus*—*vix levem Consequimur umbram*; That the Roman is infinitely short of the Greek Comedy, hardly comes up to the shadow of it. *Horace* would fain with some colour, †make good the Comparison betwixt the *Romans* and the *Greeks*; on that Topick, to flatter *Augustus*. But *Virgil*, with no disadvantage to his Compliment, gave up the Cause.

*Excudent alii——  
Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento.  
Hæ tibi erunt Artes——*

Let them have all the praises due to their polite Learning: *To govern and to give Laws, be these thy Arts, O Cæsar!* this is thy glory without a Rival.

On other occasions *Horace* declares his mind freely enough.

*Terence* complains heavily that he could not keep his Audience together: One while they ran after the Gladiators, another time the Blockheads would be gaping at a Rope-Dancer.

——*Rumor venit datum iri gladiatores——  
——neque spectari, neque cognosci potuerit,  
Ita populus, studio stupidus in funambulo,  
Animum occuparat——*

Here might be a just Fable, true Characters, good Sence, and neat Expression. Here might be Nature and Morality in a delicate turn

\* l. 6.

† *Epist.*

of Words: But where is the *Show*? where is the *Action*, that are the *Fac totum* to the Spectators?

Upon the whole; This dramattick Poetry was like a forreign Plant amongst them, the Climate not very kindly, and cultivated but indifferently; so might put forth Leaves and Blossoms, without yielding any Fruit of much importance.

*Athens* was the genuine Soyl for it, there it took, there it flourished, and ran up to overtop every thing secular and sacred: There had this Poetry the Honour, the Poms, and the Dignity; their Regalia, and their Pontificalia.

But the *Romans*, mostly look'd no deeper than the Show. They took up with the outside and Portico; their Genius dwelt in their eye; there they fed it, there indulg'd and pamper'd it immoderately: So that their *Theatres* and their *Amphitheatres* will always be remembred, tho their *Tragedy* and *Comedy* be only shadow; or *Magni Nominis umbra*.

They reckon'd these matters of wit and speculation, not so consistent with the severity of an active warlike people: something of their old *Saturn* lay heavy in their heads to the very last.

—*Hodieque manent vestigia ruris,*

says *Horace*.

And he gives the Reason;

*Serus enim Græcis admovit acumina Chartis:*

*Et post Punica bella quietus quærere cæpit,*

*Quid Sophocles, quid Thespis, & Aeschylus utile ferrent.*

### CHAP. III

#### The CONTENTS

*The first Christians cry against Idols, Stage-Plays, Pagan Worship. Apostolical Constitutions. Greek and Latin Fathers. Tertulian's Concept. Councils against Heathen Learning. Greek-Wisdom. St. Hierom, St. Austin, their Sin of Heathen Books. A Canon that no Bishop read an Heathen Book. Julians Project. The Christians countermine. A Christian Homer, Pindar,*



*and Euripides. Stage-Plays particularly levell'd at. The same heat at this day in the Spanish Jesuits. Pedro de Guzman against Stage-Plays, and Bull-feasts. The Name of Poet a Bugbear at the Reformation. The Heresie charged on Sing-Songs, and Stage-Plays. Marot's Psalms. How in vogue at the French Court. Reasons against Stage-Plays. Lactantius. The same 2000 years ago by Plato. Tragedy, Homer, Aeschylus. Objections by Aristophanes.*

When our first Christians had scuffled out their way from amongst the *Jews*, and turn'd their back on *Palestine*, they were put to a new sort of Game with the *Gentiles*.

The *Law* and the *Old-Testament-Prophets* stood 'em no longer in stead; they must now conjure up the *Sibyls*, and call the Philosophers to their assistance. And as *Idolatry* had been the most roaring sin amongst the *Israelites*; their main Cry still is against *Idols*; and nothing stood so full in their face as did the *Theatres*; where Tragedies and Commedies on the *Good Times* and *Festivals* were presented as the greatest and most solemn part of the *Pagan Worship*: For these had their Altars, and the particular Gods to which they were consecrated. *\*Idolatriæ ab initio dicata, habent prophanationis suæ maculam.*

No wonder then if the *Theatre*, with all its Ministers and dependants, had a very ill name in the first Ages of Christianity. Hence it was, that if any body had to do with the †*Theatre*, the Apostolical Constitutions would not allow him *Baptism*. Saint Cyril afterwards declares, that when *In our Baptism we say, I renounce thee, Satan, and all thy works and Poms: Those Poms of the Devil are Stage-Plays, and the like vanities.* To the same Tune Tertullian, ‡*That in our Baptism renouncing the Devil and his Poms, we cannot go to a Stage-Play without turning Apostates.*

Hence indeed the *Greek* and *Latin* Fathers had an ample Field for their Eloquence and Declamation, before the *Arrians*, the *Gnosticks*, and other intestine Heresies sprang up to divert them. So we find St. *Cyprian*, St. *Basil*, *Clement* of *Alexandria*, very warm upon this occasion: And in many a good Homily St. *Chrysostom* puts it home to 'em, and cries shame, that people should listen to a

\* Tertull. *de Idol.*

† c. 3. l. 8.

‡ l. *de Spec.*

Comedian with the same ears that they hear an Evangelical Preacher.

St. *Austin*\* will have those that go to Plays, as bad as any that write, or act them; *Nulla modo potuisse Scriptiones & actiones recipi Comædiarum, nisi mores recipientium Consonarent*. But *Tertullian* runs it off beyond all of 'em, with a notable Conceit against the Tragedians: †*The Devil*, says he, *sets them upon their high Pantofoles to give Christ the lie, who said, no body can add one Cubit to his Stature. Tragædos Cothurnis extulit Diabolus, quia nemo potest adjicere Cubitum unum ad Staturam suam, & sic Mendacem facere vult Christum*.

These Flashes from single Authors, and drops of heat, had no such wonderful effect, but that the Tragedian still walk'd on in his high shooes; yet might they well expect a more terrible storm from the Reverend Fathers, when met in a body together, in Council *Oecumenical*. Then indeed began the Ecclesiastical Thunder to fly about, and presently the Theatres, Tragedy, Comedy, Bear-baiting, Gladiators, and Hereticks, are given all to the Devil, without distinction.

Nor was it sufficient for the zeal of those times to put down Plays. All Heathen Learning fell under the like censure and condemnation. One might as well have told them of the *Antipodes*, as persuaded the reading of *Tully's Offices*: They were afraid of the *Greek Philosophy*, like *Children of a Bug-bear*, least it fetch 'em away.‡

What a plunge was §*St. Hierom* put to, by *Rufinus*, laying to his charge the *reading of Heathen Authors*? How *St. Austin* heartily begs God pardon, for having *read Virgil with delight*, in his greener years? It was not only against the *Figmenta poetarum*, that their Canons levell'd: A Council of *Carthage* would not allow that a *Bishop should read any Heathen Book*.||

This blind Zeal gave a pleasant prospect to the *Apostate Julian*: And he might well foresee what this new Religion was like to come to, without a new set of Miracles to support it. He therefore was, in this, for complying with them, and seconded their Designs; making a Law, that no Christian should be taught in the Heathen Schools,

\* *Epist.* 202. *Nectar*.

§ *In Ruf.*

† *l. de Spect.*

|| *Conc.* 4. *Can.* 16.

‡ *Clem. Strom.*

or make use of that Learning. This made the Christians suspect a Snake in the Grass, and put them on the other hand, \*upon a Counter-Plot, to frustrate his project. So they set to work Apollinarius, a person, very luckily then; of manifold Learning and Wit; who, in the room of Homer, composed for them the History of the Old Testament in Heroick Verse, down to the Times of Saul.

And Comedies also in imitation of Menander, together with Tragedies, like those of Euripides; and Lyricks, exactly to the strain of Pindar. An old Author, in his life of Gregory Nazianzen, assures us how that that holy Prelate undertook and performed the very same thing, so defeated the purpose of that wicked Tyrant. These Noble Labours have all dropt short of us? What Philosophers, what Conjurers should we have been? how our Ears would ha' tingled at this day, with the three Homers, and a Triple Round of all the Græcian Poetry? But the Fathers and Councils for several Ages declaring against every thing of Heathen denomination; the Stage-Plays, of course, were cry'd out upon, as Pagan Practice, Heathen Tradition, Rags and Relicks of Paganism, and Pagan Idolatry, invented by the Devil, and appropriated to the Worship of false Gods.

And, upon this Topick, to this day, we find the Spanish Jesuits wondrous Eloquent. Says Pedro de Guzman;† the Christian Emperours, Kings, and Popes have cut off, and burnt with the fire of their holy Zeal, many Heads of that old Hydra of Pagan Leudness: But yet there be two Heads that still remain, which cause a world of mischief: These two Heads also must be lopt off and burnt down to rights; to wit, y Comedias y los Juegos de Toros, Comedies, and the Bull-Feasts.

At the beginning of the Reformation, the name of Poet was a mighty Scar-Crow to the Mumpsimus Doctors every where. The German Divines, and Professors at Kullen, were nettled and uneasie by this Poet, and the t'other Poet;‡ Poet Reuclin, Poet Erasmus. Every body was reckoned a Poet that was more a Conjuror than themselves. And, belike, the Jesuits are still of Opinion, That the Stage-Plays have not done 'em service. Campanella tells us, that the German and Gallican Heresie began with Sing-Song, and is

\* Sozomen Hist. Eccles. l. 5. c. 17.

† Dis. 5 § 1.

‡ Epist. obsc.

carried on by \*Comedy, and Tragedies. *Ex Cantilenis inceptit Hæresis Germanica & Gallicana, Comædiis & Tragædiis nutritur;* Meaning, perhaps, *Marots* Translation of the *Psalms*. The *Sorbonne* declared against them, yet were they so much in vogue at the French Court, that no person of Note, but had their favourite Psalm to their occasions. King *H. 2.* chose the 42 Psalm, *Ainsi qu'on oyt le Cerf. Like as the Hart doth*—which he sung when a-hunting. *Madam de Valentinois*, who was in Love, took the 130. *Du fond de ma pensée—From the bottom of my heart*, which she sung *en volte*. The Queens choice was the 6th, *Ne vueillez pas o Sire, Lord, in thy wrath*—to an Air on the *Chant des buffons*. *Anthony King of Navarr* had the 43th, *Revenge moy, prens la querelle. Judge, and revenge my Cause*,† which he tun'd to the *Brawl of Poictiers*, and the rest in like manner. *Clement Marot* set their Pipes a-going in Court and Countrey. And the poor Hereticks keep it up to this day; tho' (God-wot) they now (many of them) sing their Song in a strange Land.

To be call'd Apostate; to be deny'd our Baptism, Eucharist, and Christian Burial; to be Excommunicated, and given up to the Devil by so many Fathers, Canons, and Councils; however terrible to the Ears, is not so convincing to the Understanding, as one fair Argument from Reason. What occurs of this kind is peradventure most-what comprehended in these words of *Lactantius*.

*Comicæ Fabulæ de stupris Virginum loquuntur, aut amoribus Meretricum: Et quo‡ magis sunt eloquentes qui flagitia illa finxerunt, eo magis sententiarum elegancia persuadent. Et facilius in-hærent Audientium memoriæ versus numerosi & ornati. Tragicæ Historiæ subjiciunt oculis Parricidia, & Incesta, & Cothurnata scelera demonstrant.*

In Comedies, says he, are represented the debauch, and leud Pranks amongst Women of evil Conversation: And the more excellent that the Poet is, the deeper is the impression on the hearers. The Neatness and Elegance of Thought, with the Beauty and Sweetness of the Verse, run always in their mind, and will not out of their head. Tragedy lays before 'em Parricides, Incests, and Wickedness in its Pontificalibus.

\* l. Poetic. c. 6.

† *Florimond Ramond, Hist Hæres.*

‡ Lib. 6. Inst. Div.

This indeed is of weight, and deserves consideration. It is a standing Objection; and was a Pagan Objection above two thousand years ago.

*Plato* is very particular in his charge; says he, Fraud and Rapine, \*and all manner of violence they commend or countenance by good Presidents, and Examples of this, and t'other God, or Son of God. *Mercury* is made the Patron for stealing. And how scurvily does *Jupiter* deal with his Old Father? What piques, fewds and domestick squabbles amongst themselves? nor is their War with the Giants a more tolerable fiction. †Whatever is devised of this kind is a false fable, and a lye, and yet, were it true, not fit to be divulged to the people. ‡God is never to be represented whether in Songs, in Psalms, or Tragedy, otherwise than Just, Good, and Gracious. And on no account, to be said the author of Evil. When any evil is done the Cause is to be sought for elsewhere. Nor is it to be imagin'd that God had any hand in't. Therefore is it not to be endured that any Poet should as *Homer*,§ give out, that,

*Two Barrels in his Cellar Jove has still  
Of gifts to be bestow'd on Mortal Wights,  
One full of good, the other full of ill,  
And usually to mingle them delights.*

Nor must be suffer'd that infraction and violation of the Oaths and Truce by ||*Pandarus* when done at the instigation of *Jupiter* and *Minerva*.

Nor that broyl and controversie amongst the Gods, put to the Arbitration and Decision of *Jupiter* and *Themis*.

Nor can *Æschylus* be allow'd to vent any thing like that saying,

*Whom Jove wou'd destroy he takes away their Senses.*

Nor, if in any sort of Poetry relation is made of the affliction that befel to *Niobe*, or to the *Pelopidæ*, or to the *Trojans*; or the like: It must not be suggested that this was the work of God: but if it be; then a reason is to be subjoyned, as that God did, indeed, what was good and just, and did chastise 'em, for their good. But he must not say that punishment is an Affliction, and that God afflicted them.

\* *l. Common. Dial. 2.*

‡ *Commonw. ut supra.*

† *L. of Laws, Dial. 12.*

§ *Il. ω.*

|| *Il. δ*

For that would neither be Pious, be Profitable, nor be Consistent.

Nor must he represent God disguising himself and putting on several shapes to carry on some Cheat or Imposture, nor to be capable of any Change, Passion, or Perturbation. Nor say that the *Gods wander from Town to Town in the likeness of Strangers*.\* And such Lies as are abroad, of *Proteus* and *Thetis*. And in some Tragedies, *Juno* turned into a Priest, gathering the benevolence of the Congregation for the Sons of *Inachus*, newly restored to life.

Nor is the lying Dream, sent by *Jupiter* to *Agamemnon*† by any means to be excused.

Nor *Æschylus* where he brings in *Thetis* complaining that at her Wedding *Apollo* in her *Epithalamium* sung:

*That long the Son of Thetis was to live;  
By no disease molested. That the Gods  
Took of my Fortunes care and special liking;  
And gave me joy, and praises in abundance.  
Cou'd my hopes fail, thus founded on Apollo,  
His Mouth Divine, Fatidical, and True?  
Yet He, the same, that flatt'ed me so fair,  
And at my Table sat a willing guest,  
He, that thus did and said, even He has slain my Child.*

And in *Homer*, when she cries out,‡

*Ah wretched Goddess that I was to bear  
The best of all the Heroes——*

And when *Jupiter* mourns so heavily:§

*Ah me! my Son Sarpedon will be slain——  
And for the honour of his Son so dear,  
For Rain he drops of blood from Heaven sends.*

And when he laughs at *Vulcan* limping along with a Cup of *Nectar*.

*And then the Gods laught all at once out-right  
To see the lame, and sooty Vulcan skink.||*

*Æschylus* had, in *Athens*, made a great noise with his Tragedy call'd the *Furies*: after which *Aristophanes*, to expose the Tragick

\* 'Οδυσ. 7.

† *Il.* 2.

‡ *Il.* Σ.

§ *Il.* π.

|| *Il.* α.



Poets wrote a Comedy, which he nam'd the *Frogs*: There he charges *Euripides* for having brought upon the Stage, *Phædra's*, *Sthenobæa's*, and the like wicked Strumpets. Nay.

*What is he not guilty of?  
Has he not shewn you panders,  
And Women bringing forth in Temples?  
And such as mix with their own Brothers?  
And those that say: Not to live is to live?  
Thus has he fill'd the Town  
With Scribes, Buffoons, and Monkeys,  
That banter, and make Asses of the People.*

He again twits him with his,

*Τίς οἶθεν εἰ τὸ ζῆν μὲν ἔστι καθανεῖν,  
το πνεῖν δὲ δεῖπνεῖν, καὶ τὸ καθεύδειν κώδιον;  
Who can tell but that to live is to dye,  
To drink is to think, and to sleep, a woolsack.*

The second line is added to ridicule the former, and for this sentence he taxes *Euripides* as teaching *Scepticism*; And everywhere is playing upon that,

*My Tongue did Swear, my Mind was never Sworn.*

As if thereby *Euripides* opened a door to Equivocation and Perjury.

Thus we see how well *Aristophanes*, and *Plato* agree with *Lactantius*; and charge upon Tragedy the same enormities, Incests, and *Cothurnata scelera*, and also the odd unlucky sayings that stick in our memory, and will not out of a body's head.

When King *Archelaus* asked *Plato* what book he might read to learn the state of Affairs and Government in *Athens*, *Plato* bid him only to read *Aristophanes*; 'tis likely that we may better trust him for the *State of Poetry* in his time. And we may be confident he would mince nothing, out of any favour or affection, being a professed Enemy to *Euripides*.

Upon a presumption then that nothing more can be rais'd to bear against this sort of Poetry; we may proceed to offer something in answer to those objections.

## CHAP. IV

*Aristotle's general Answer evasive. Plato a better Divine. Not better than our Modern. God may use ill instruments. The false Dream. The two Barrels. Fables before Homer. He of God sensibly. Plato, Cant. Metaphore the utmost we are capable of. Fables. Allegory. Celsus to Origen against the Bible. Allegory, a cure for all. Homers Fables from the Bible. The false Dream, from the Story of Achab improv'd by Homer. Averroes of Arabian Poets. Apollo Loxias. Particular sentences. Texts of Scripture. Juno, Job's Wife. SS. in Vulgar Tongue. Euripides, ill Women. No blame to the art. Pomp of the Theatre. What ill names by Jesuits.*

For every Cavil, against any thing devised by the Poets, in relation to the Gods, \**Aristotle* proposes one general answer, That a Critick need not be so fierce and positive to quarrel on that account, where all are in the dark, that neither Critick nor Poet know ought of the matter. We may grant that this answer is evasive; And may allow that *Aristotle* might not be so great a Divine as *Plato*: yet, doubtless our Modern Divines are a match for *Plato*: And have the better end of the Staff in this controversie. Who all hold with *Homer* and the old Poets that God may to good ends and purposes, make use of evil means, and instruments.

And thus was *Pandarus* employ'd by *Jove* and *Pallas* to break the Peace. And the lying Dream sent to cheat *Agamemnon*.

—A Dream he call'd, false Dream, said he,  
Go, hie to *Agamemnons* Tent, and say,  
Distinctly, as you bidden are by me.  
Bid him bring up his Army now to Troy,  
For now the time is come, he shall take it.

Objections of this kind make no difficulty now-adays, with the most Orthodox: nor do the *two Barrels in Jove's Cellar*, make any ill sound: we know with what Heifer they have plowed; and see the Original of all the Greek Mythology; their Gods, and Heroes.

\* *Poetica.*

Not to represent their Gods with face, and fingers, with actions, and passions, and other Modifications, after the fashions of men, were to say nothing. *St. Paul* that soared as high as any body, and had the gift of Tongues, declares the things above *ineffable*. *Homer* knew this; therefore would not *banter* the World with hard words, and unintelligible gibberish, as *Plato* and others have since done; but did accommodate his Speech to our Human Senses, by Metaphors, Similitudes, Tropes, and Parables; after the manner of *Moses*, and the Old Prophets before him. He entertains and fills us to the utmost of our Organs and Capacity. Something he finds for all our Senses. He brings them to our Eyes, our Ears, our Touch: *Nectar* he provides for our Taste, and there always exhales an Ambrosial Odour in the Divine Presence. What *Plato*, or an Angel would say further, passes all understanding, would not enter our Organs; could have no relish or proportion to affect us, more than the Musick of the Spheres. Metaphor must be the Language, when we travel in a Countrey beyond our Senses.

The wisest part of the World were always taken with *Fables*, as the most delightful means to convey Instruction, and leave the strongest Impression on our Mind. They in the *\*East* will not be perswaded that the *Fables*, with us, under the name of *Æsop*, were other than of their Countrey growth: And *Lockman* they avouch to be the Author of them.

The Old Prophets could devise nothing higher for the future *Messiah*, than that every thing he should say would be a *Parable*.

As for the *Fables* which in *Homer*, or on the Stage give offence: The Antients had a thing call'd an *Allegory*, which went a great way towards stopping the mouth of many a pert Observator.

We see the word in the Apostle *St. Paul*,† and the application of it, which *St. Origen* was glad to find, when *Celsus* call'd him to account for the *Old Testament*; so many odd Tales, Eve with the Serpent, Cain and Abel: the building of Babel, Sodom, with Lot and his Daughters, ‡*Parracidia*, & *Incesta*, & *Cothurnata scelera*, far beyond any thing fabled in Tragedies of Thyestes: *θεοστειῶν κακῶν ἀνομώτερα*. Shall we Christians only, says he, be denied the benefit of this Allegory? May not we be allowed our Mystery, and Tropological meaning?

\* *Huet* on Romance.

† *Galat. c. 4.*

‡ *Origen* against *Celsus*, l. 4.

So we see what *Lactantius* objected against *Homer*, and the *Heathen Tragedies*, is by the *Heathens* objected against our *Bible*, and *Religion*.

But we need not be so angry on either hand. Find but out the *Allegory*, and we are all to-rights again.

Besides, it is now no secret, that *Homer* had most of his *Fables* from some *Hebrew Tradition* or *Original*. \**Clement of Alexandria*, and *Eusebius* made the discovery long ago.

So the lying *Dream*† sent by *Jupiter* to *Agamemnon*, which *Plato* was so much offended at, is a *Poetical Improvement* from the *Story of Achab*. What pretty turn and dress he sets it off in, to bend and fashion it into one piece with his *Song*; and to accommodate it the better to our *Ears* in a more *Philosophical Climate*?

*Averroes*, after his *Comment* on the *Poetica*, allows that *Aristotles Rules* do not much concern the *Arabian Poets*; *What then*, says he, *shall we conclude that he wrote not Rules for the Arabians? God forbid! Aristotle wrote Nature; he wrote for all Human kind*.

But the *Arabian Fancies* always are on the gallop: They are not to march in rank and file, nor be subject to our *Europæan Discipline*. *Homer* understood their *Spirit*, and could make the best on't: He knew how to manage the fiery *Arab*, and bring the wildest *Asiatick* to his hand.

*Æschylus* is not to be blamed, when he tells of *Apollo* singing at a *Wedding*, that much happiness should ensue thereupon; and the *Child* should live long. *Apollo* before then had the *Epithet of Loxias*, from his double meaning; to shew the *Nature of Oracles*. Be not out of patience, *Thetis*, thy *Child* shall live, his memory, his better part. *Homer* has ensur'd it for *Achilles*, to the end of the *World*.

If then the *Fables* heretofore employed for the *Drama*, are not so hastily to be censured; no body, I conceive, will stick with us for the particular sayings, as before mention'd to be objected by *Aristophanes*, *Plato*, and *Lactantius*.

For their good sayings, we have *St. Paul* citing a whole *Verse* out of a *Comedy of Menander*. *St. Clemens of Alexandria* brings more proofs for *Christianity* from *Menander* and other *Comedies*, than from all the *Bible*, or any other *Topick*.

\* *Strom. Pr. Evang.*

† *Il. l. 2. Common. Dia. 2.*

On the other hand, where ill men are represented, we must not take it amiss that they say ill things. *Dolus an Virtus, quis in hoste requirit?* When we remember the saying, we remember it the saying of a Rogue; of *Sinon*, as notorious amongst his Companions, as was *Judas* amongst the Apostles.

*Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo.*

This by every body is allowed to be a very wicked saying. But why may not *Juno* sometimes take as much liberty of her Tongue, as *Job's Wife*, or any other Old-Testament Matron? There is no question but we find more abuse of the sayings in holy Scripture, and the consequence more Tragical, than from any perverted Text in Poetry. *Curse ye Meroz*, serves any bodies purpose, that would be cutting Throats. *Campenella* and *Pedro de Guzman* would urge as much against the S.S. in our Mother Tongue, on this account, as against this *Nurse of Heresie*, this *Hydra's Head* of Dramatick representations.

If there be any eye and inspection on the Pulpits, that they be kept to decency and Rule; May not the King and Queens Theatre deserve the like care, and have its Committee of Lay-Bishops to see that no Doctrine be there broached, but what tends to the Edification, as well as to the Delight of the Spectators.

If *Euripides* brought on the Stage Harlots \**Æschylus* shew'd none; nor any Woman that might be so much as suspected to be in Love. What was an errour in one, is not to be charged on the rest; nor a Reflection on the Art. Indeed, when the Art is abused, one may with *Tully* cry out, *O præclaram Morum Emendatricem Poeticam!* But the same Irony is as applicable to the Pulpit, as to the Stage.

Grant there, in a Tragedy, the felicity of the Invention, the novelty of the Fictions, the strength of Verse, the easiness of Expression, the solid Reason, the warmth of Passion, still heightened and rising from Act to Act; together with the richness of Figures, the pomp of the Theatre, the habits, geesture and voice of the Actors, at the same instant charming both the Eyes and the Ears; so the Senses being won, the Judgment is surprised, and the whole Man at once led captive: A body must be of Brass or Stone to re-

\* *Aristoph.* *Frogs.*

sist so many Charms, and be Master of himself amidst so much allurement and temptation.

Grant all this, I say, where is the hurt? what is the danger? If *the End* of all is to shew *Virtue in Triumph*. The noblest thoughts make the strongest impression; and the juster passions find the kindest reception amongst us. The Medicine is not less wholesom, for the Honey, or the gilded Pill. Nor can a Moral Lesson be less profitable, when dressed and set off with all the advantage and decoration of the Theatre.

This is, indeed, of all diversions the most bewitching; and the Theatre is a Magazine, not to be trusted, but under the special eye and direction of a Virtuous Government, otherwise, according to the course of the World, it might, possibly, degenerate; to deserve the Aspersions, and ill names, whereby the Jesuits would render it odious, calling it the *School of Vice*, the *Sanctuary of Venus*, the *Temple of Impiety*, the *Furnace of Babylon*, the *Consistory of Impurity*, the *Shop of Leudness*, the *Pest of Common-wealths*, the *Seminary of Debauchery*, *Satan's Festival*, and the *Devil's Dancing School*.

## CHAP. V

*Of Poetry in Italy. Aristotle's Works. Tramontains. Cardinal Bibiena. Tragedy there with Chorus. Strolers. Christ's Passion. Of Poetry in France. Clem. Marot. Strolers there. Proceedings at Law against them. Report of their Case. Their Old Testament. Acts of the Apostles, and Christ's Passion. Banisht from France. Comedy there. Tragedy by Hardy, Corneille, Richelieu. Academy Royal. The Theatre. Caution that no Equivoue, nor ought against good Manners. More nice than the Pulpit. Their Gallantry, Verse, Language, unfit for Tragedy. Dramatick representations banish'd from Spain. Nurse of Heresie. Father Guzman. Escobar. Of Poetry in England. British, Saxon, Norman, Latin and Provençial Poetry there. Richard Ceur de Lion, a Provençial Poet. Our Monks and History false on that account. The Gay Science. That and the Albigenes contemporary, and from the*



*same Countrey. King Richard's Fellow-Poets. Jeffry Rudel, and Countess of Tripoly.*

In the beginning of the last Century, when People began to open their Eyes, and look farther into Matters of Religion and good Literature, *Italy* had much the start and advantage from the rest of *Europe*, thither were *Aristotle's* Works first brought a-shoar; and there were they translated, conn'd, and commented by the chiefest Wits amongst them. And above all, his *Poetica* engag'd their utmost care and application.

So many Comments had they made, and so many Critical Observations, before, on this side the *Alps*, any thing, in that way, was understood, that they began to lay it down for a truth, that the *Tramontans* had no *gusto*. *Oltramontani*, says one of them, *Non sono zelanti delle buono regole de Greci, & de Latini. They make no Conscience of breaking the good Laws of the Greeks and Latins.*

Others undertook to put in practice, and write by his Principles and Direction. *Bibiena* (afterwards a Cardinal) first try'd his Talent on a Comedy; and was followed by *Ariosto*, *Piccolomini*, *Machiavel*, and many others, who took *Plautus* and *Terence* for their Patterns.

*Trissino*, *Ruscalli*, *Cinthio*, *Tasso*, with many more, wrote Tragedies in blank Verse, with the *Chorus*. and every thing to the best of their power, after the Athenian Models.

But *Italy* had no *Fund* for the vast charge of Dramatick representations; they had no standing Revenue for the Theatre; and however magnificent some Prince might be on an extraordinary Wedding or great occasion; there was nothing constant, nor could it, in such circumstances, be expected, that the *Drama* there should turn to account, or rise to any tolerable reputation. Therefore the ordinary business of the Stage was left amongst a company of *Strolers*, who wandred up and down, acting Farce, or turning into Farce, whatever they acted. \**Castelvetro* tells us, that even at *Rome*, in his time, *Christ's Passion* was so acted by them, as to set all the Audience a-laughing.

*Francis* the first, by whose Encouragement Letters had begun to flourish in *France*, and Poetry more particularly, by the means of

\* *Poetica*.

*Clement Marot* (who then translated the *Psalms*, and sent abroad his *Balades*, which *Campenella* reckons to have ushered in the *Heresie*) King *Francis*, I say, was much delighted, for want of better, with these *Strolers*. At the latter end of his Reign we find a *Cause* of the *Strolers* notably pleaded and debated amongst their *Lawyers* and the King's Counsel.

The Charge against them extracted from the Parliament-Rolls, Anno 1541.

*That They, 2 or 3 years ago, had undertaken to represent Christ's Passion, and the Acts of the Apostles; and therein had employed mean illiterate fellows, who were not cunning in those matters, as a Carpenter, a Bum-Bailiff, a Weaver, and others, who had committed divers faults, both in the Fiction, and in their Action. And to lengthen out the time, had interlarded many Apochryphal Matters, not contained in the Acts of the Apostles, that their Play might last three or four days longer; thereby to get the more Money from the People. Adding, moreover at the beginning, or at the end, Drolls, and wanton Farces, and by that means had made it hold out for six or seven months together: By means whereof the Divine Service was neglected, no body went to Church, Charity grew cold; besides all the Adulteries, Fornications, Mockeries, and Derisions unexpressible.*

*More especially, in the first place, on Holy-days, from eight or nine a Clock a-mornings, the People left their Parish-Mass, Sermon, and Vespers, to take their place at the Play house; and staid there till five in the Afternoon. So that Preaching was left off, the Preachers finding no body to hear them.*

*And the People, as they came back from the Play house, would publickly and loudly mock at the Plays and Actors, repeating some words they had heard knockt out of joynt, at the Play; or some part ill acted, saying in derision, The Holy Ghost was loth to come down, and the like.*

*And generally the Parsons of the Parishes, to have their pastime at the Plays, have left off the Afternoon Prayers on Holy-days: Or have said them alone by themselves at Noon, an hour not usual, nor Canonical. And even the King's Chaplains, in the Chappel of the Houshold, whilst the Plays lasted, have on Holy-days said the Evening-Prayers at Noon: And besides, ran them off post-haste, to be*

*gone to the Play-house: A thing undecent, unusual, of evil example, and contrary to the holy Councils of the Church, namely, the Council of Carthage, where it is said, Qui die solemnī prætermisso Ecclesiæ conventu ad spectacula vadit, excommunicetur.*

2. *Preaching is more decent for the Instruction of the People (provided 'tis done by Theologians, men of Learning and Knowledge) than are the Plays, made by those that are ignorant and illiterate; who neither know what they speak nor what they act; representing the Acts of the Apostles, the Old Testament, and the like Histories which they pretend to Act.*

3. *It is plain by Natural Reason, that without first knowing the Truth, one cannot make a Fiction; for Fiction is to be something as near the Truth as may be; whereas neither the Masters, nor the Actors know the A B C. They understand neither the Bible, nor any prophane Learning, being Mechanicks, as Cobblers, Botchers, Porters, that can neither read nor write, nor have been train'd to the Stage, or that sort of exercise: Neither is their Tongue well hung, nor have they proper Language, nor can they accent the words, or give them a decent pronunciation: Nor do they know at all what they are about, or what it is they say; so that sometimes they chop one word into three, stop in the middle of a sentence, making it a question, which is a sentence of Admiration; accenting and pronouncing with their gesture every thing Kim Kam, quite contrary; causing a laughter, and hooting in the Play-house, that instead of turning to Edification, there is nothing but scandal and derision.*

4. *The Farces and wanton Interludes which they mix with the Mysteries Ecclesiastical, make it a thing forbidden by all the Councils, as the Doctors all agree.*

5. *It is visible that what they do is for Lucre only; as they would do with a Tavern, or Trade: And they raise the price, which the first year was twenty and twenty five Crowns, the next thirty and thirty six Crowns, and is this present year forty and fifty Crowns of the Sun, for every Box.*

6. *Great mischief, by Assignations, under colour of going to the Plays, Adulteries, &c.*

7. *The Plays occasion Junketing and expences extraordinary, amongst the common people; so that which a Handy-crafty-man has earn'd in a week, shall be all spent in one day, at the Plays, and the*

*Junketing and Drunkenness, whereby his Wife and poor Children suffer all the week.*

8. *Charity so much impaired, that within the six weeks that the Plays have continued, the Alms are lessen'd 3000 Livres.*

*Notwithstanding all which, one Royer, a Fish-seller, a Carpenter, a Cobler, and others their Companions have a-new for this next year undertaken to have acted the Old Testament, and set a price for hereafter to get money from the people.*

*All of which, the King's Attorney General being informed, hath put a stop to their farther proceedings. They shew a Letter of Privilege they had obtained from the King.*

*By the Letters it appears, they had suggested to the King, that what they did was out of pure Zeal and Devotion, and for the Edification of the People, which is false; and besides, their quality and circumstances speak the contrary; and what they do is barely a Trade for gain. Moreover, in the Old Testament are many things not so proper to be declared to the People, weak and simple, that may be drawn in to turn Jews for want of understanding.*

*For these considerations a stop is put to their Acting of the Old Testament, till the good pleasure, will and intention of the King, when inform'd of those matters, shall be known.*

*The said Attorney General also presented another Complaint against the former Company, that they might put into the Poors Box, out of their Profits, for their representing the Acts of the Apostles, eight hundred Livres till farther order; the like against the Company that acted Christ's Passion.*

*The Council for the Strolers saith, He comes not to answer the Charge against them that show the Acts of the Apostles; but for the new Company only of the Mystery, for the Old Testament. And true it is, that the King two years since having sometimes seen them Act the Mystery of the Passion; and by the account then made him, how well they played the Acts of the Apostles; and that it was worth his while also to see the Representation of the Old Testament, Royer above-named, being then present, did promise the King to get the Old Testament Acted. And thereupon the King gave leave to the said Royer, to have the Representation of the Old Testament; and granted him Letters Patents accordingly.*

*This Record, abridg'd here, in the translation, giving so particu-*

lar an History of the Stage in those days, is added at length in the Original, at the end of the Book.

King *Francis* liv'd about five or six years after. And then were the Comedians both *French* and *Italians*, all packt off, and banished the Kingdom.

In 1597. *Peter l'Ariveu* published Comedies, written, as he tells us, in imitation of the Antient Greeks, *Latins*, and Modern *Italians*. And the end he proposed was according to *Horace*,

*Quelque profit, & contentement ensemble.*

After him *Alexander Hardy* attempted Tragedy, whose works were published ann. 1625. Not long after succeeded the famous *Corneille*, who began to write for the Stage, after *Hardy's* Model.

And now, if the *French* Theatre did not rise to equal the glory of the *Romans*, and Antient *Greeks*, it was not for want of Encouragement from the Government. Cardinal *Richelieu*, who had the power in his hand, did heartily and generously perform his part. He founded the *Academy Royal*, and more especially provided for the Theatre. Yet with this Caution, \*never to represent *Aucunes actions Malhonnestes, ny d'user d'aucunes paroles lascives, ny a double entente, qui puissent blesser l'honnesteté publique*. And we find the Poets stand corrected, and do penance if they chance to offend against this declaration. The liberty *de l'équivoque*, nor any *idée vilaine* will there escape censure, even by the Audience. So the *Theodore* by *Corneille*, wou'd not take. No other reason could be devised by the Author, but the meer conceipt of her Prostitution, which was odious to the imagination. And He rightly observes from thence, that our Theatres are much more delicate on those occasions, than were the Antient Fathers, or the Pulpits. Says he; *However 'tis some satisfaction to me that I see the better and more sound part of my Judges impute this ill success to that imagination of a Prostitution, which one could not endure; tho' 'twas well known, it would not take effect: And that to allay the horror of it, I made use of all the helps that art and experience could furnish me withall. Amidst this disgrace, I rejoyce to see the purity of our Stage, to find that an history, the fairest Ornament of the second book of St. Ambros's Virgins, appears too licentious to pass on our Stage. What*

\* *Lew.* 13. Decl. 1641.

might have been said, if, like that great Doctor of the Church, I had shown the Virgin in that infamous place, if I had described the various agitations of her mind, whilst she was in the place, if I had drawn the troubles she felt that instant she saw (her lover) Didymus come in to her; 'tis on this occasion that this great Saint makes Triumph that Eloquence which Converted St. Austin, it is for this spectacle, that He particularly invites the Virgins to open their eyes.

I kept her from the sight, And so much as I could, from the imagination of my Audience. Yet after all my industry, the modesty of our Theatre is such, to dislike that little, which the necessity of my subject, forced me to make known.

In points of decency the French are certainly very delicate, and commendable. The noble encouragement they met withal, and their singular application have carried them very far in the improvement of the *Drama*. Nor were the Audience to be taxed for the hasty applause, they have often given to Plays of no great merit. It has been so in all Nations.

As, in Pictures, A man who had never seen such a thing before, wou'd find his amusement, and be in admiration at every Sign-post, or *Saracens head* that he Travels by. The first Plays of *Corneille* were better, that is, more regular, than any before him, the Audience had never seen the like. Judgment runs, most-what by comparison: by Purple we Judge of Purple.

They now see the difference betwixt his first Essays, and the Plays composed in his riper years.

After all it is observ'd how much, that Wild-goose-chase of Romance runs still in their head, some Scenes of Love must everywhere be shuffled in, tho' never so unseasonable.

The Grecians were for Love and Musick as mad as any Monsieur of 'em all; yet their Musick kept within bounds; attempted no Metamorphosis to turn the *Drama* to an *Opera*. Nor did their Love come whining on the Stage to Effeminate the Majesty of their Tragedy. It was not any love for *Briseis* that made *Achilles* so wroth; it was the affront, in taking his booty from him, in the face of the Confederate Army. This, his Stomach cou'd not digest.

—*nec gravem*

*Peleidæ stomachum cedere Nescij. Hor.*



One, with the Genius of *Miguel Cervante*, might, doubtless, find matter for as good a Satyr, from the French Gallantry, as He had done from the Spanish Chivalry.

Another objection, is their writing Plays in Ryme.

The *Hexameter* wou'd not pass in Greek or Latin Tragedy, for the language is to be *Agissante*, active. They reckon'd the *Jambick* to be the verse for business.

——*Natum rebus agendis.* Hor.

The French seem the remotest in the World from this sort of Turn. Our Ear shou'd not be hankering after the Ryme, when the business should wholly take us up, and fill our Head. The words must be all free, independant, and disengag'd, no entanglement of Ryme to be in our way. We must clear the Decks, and down with the Ornaments and Trappings in the day of Action, and Engagement.

But they are not only fetter'd with Ryme, but their verse is the long *Alexandrin*, of twelve syllables: with a stop, or pause always in the middle.

As if a Latin Tragedy were written all in *Pentameters*. To the Tune of,

*Hei mihi quod domino, non licet ire tuo;*

Or, with us, to the Air of *Hopkins* and *Sternold*.

*O sing unto the Lord, a new and joyful song.*

A Man shou'd not trust his own Ear to Judge a forreign language by, but their own best authors are sensible of this halt in their verse, and complain of that *Cesure* and perpetual *Monotony*, as they call it.

In fine their language it self wants strength and sinews, is too feeble for the Weight and Majesty of Tragedy. We see their Consonants spread on Paper, but they stick in the Hedge; they pass not their Teeth in their Pronunciation.

From *Spain* little observable can be expected in relation to Dramatick Poetry; Since *Campanella* had assur'd them that it is *the Nurse of Heresie*.

So Father *Guzman* informs us that his Catholick Majesty, *Phil.*

II.\* towards the end of his life, (when his Wisdom was *en su punto*, on the prick of perfection, old age being *la salsa de la sabiduria*, seeing neither *medio*, *o remedio* to reform them) did quite banish them the Country.

Then another Jesuit lets us to know how religiously the truly Catholick, *Phil. IV.* this very year 1646. hath packt them away as the common Plague from out the Kingdoms of *Spain*, by his Royal Edict.

*Quam pie Phil. IV. vere Catholicus Comædias ab Hispaniæ regnis, hoc Anno 1646. ut Communem pestem regio ablegarit Edicto, Escobar. Mor. Theol.* So we see this Nurse of Heresie, this Head of the Pagan Hydra, is like to have no footing within the Catholick Majesties Dominions. The *Inquisition* and the *Muses* must not set their Horses together.

Since the decay of the Roman Empire this Island, peradventure has been more fortunate in matters of Poetry, than any of our Neighbours. Notwithstanding the present flourish and ostentation of the French Theatre: Our Wit might have made us the better Poets: tho' our honesty make us worse *Politicians*. We find of the *British* Poetry to this day. One of our oldest Medals bears an Harp on the Reverse, with the Name *Kunobeline* around it.

The Germans have often printed with *Plautus* a Comedy call'd *Querolus*; which no body now questions, but that it was written by *Gildas*, who lived *Anno. 493*.

After him *Thaliessin*, and *Merlin*, and others, had they not written in *Welch*, might yet deserve an esteem among us.

Our *Saxon* Kings have their Grants, and Charters in *Ryme*, yet upon Record.

The first *William* came, singing *Roland*, to fight that decisive Battel, which wan him England. *Rolandi cantu inchoato, ut bellatorum animos accenderet, prælium Commiserunt.* As *Mat. Paris*, *Mat. Westminster*, *Will. Malmsbury*, *Knighton*, and the rest inform us.

And indeed, to write in *Latin* the World had not the like to our Poets of that Century. *Joseph of Exeter*, wrote so much above the Age, that he was well-nigh lost from us; his Poem of the *Trojan War*, going a long time currant in Print for a *Classick*, under the

\* *Disc. 6. I. 8.*

name of *Cornelius Nepos*. He brings us to *King R. I.* with whom, and with *Baldwyn* Archbishop of *Canterbury*, He went to the *Holy War*.

This King, *Richard Ceur de lion*, and his Brother *Jeffrey* had formerly liv'd much in the Courts of several Princes, in and about *Provence*, so came to take delight in their Language, their Poetry (then call'd the *Gay Science*) and their Poets; which began not long before his time, to be in great vogue in the World.

The Italian \*Authors acknowledge that the best part of their Language, and of their Poetry is drawn from that of *Provence*, as, indeed, is also that of the Spanish, and other Modern Languages. It is certain that *Petrarch* (the Poet that the Italians brag most on to this day) wou'd show very empty, If the *Provencial* Poets had from him, all their own again. And, in truth, all our *Modern* Poetry comes from them.

Never was known that application, both in the Princes and People, as at that time every where to the *Provencial* Poetry, which gave one of †their Romancers the fancy that *Charlemain* made a *Donation of Provence*, to be the *Poets Patrimony*.

I should not be so large on this occasion but to antidote against an impression, our *Monks* of that time might otherwise make upon us. As, amongst the rest, *Roger Hoveden* tells, that this King *Richard*, to raise himself a name, went about begging and buying verses and flattering Rymes; And by rewards enticed over from France Singers and Jesters, to sing of him in the Streets. And it was every where given out, that there was not the like of him, in the World again. *Hic ad augmentum & famam sui Nominis, emendicata carmina, & rithmos adulatorios comparabat, & de regno Francorum Cantores & Joculatores allexerat ut de illo canerent in Plateis, & dicebatur ubique quod non erat talis in orbe.*

That these Songsters and Jesters were brought from *France* is most false. *France* had no pretensions thereabouts in those days. Those Countreys were *Fiefs* of the Empire. *Frederick I.* had *Enfeofed Ramond Berenger* of the County of *Provence*, *Forcalquiers*, and places adjacent, as not long after *Frederick II.* install'd *William au courb nez*, Prince of *Orange*, King of *Arles* and *Viennes*: which family had formerly possess'd *Provence*. As truly, he might have

\* *Bembo. Speron Sperone, &c.*

† *Phil: de Mousks.*

said, they were brought from *Spain*: for *Ildefonso* King of *Arragon*, Count of *Provence*, *Barcelona*, &c. had given and settled on his Son this County of *Provence*. It may be noted that about the same time that the *Provencial* Poetry did flourish, did also spring up that *Heresy* of the *Albigenses* that so much alarm'd the Popish World, and cost so many *Crusades* to suppress them. *Ramond* Count of *Tholouse* was the Protector of the *Albigenses*, and was also a principal *Patron* of these Poets. *Guilhem* of *Agoult*, *Albert* of *Sisteron*, *Rambald* of *Orange* (names now reviv'd by the Duke of *Savoy*) and the like, were *Provencial* Poets; All the Princes that were in league together to support the *Albigenses* against *France* and the Pope, did encourage and patronize these Poets, amongst the rest a King of *Arragon* lost his life in the quarrel, at a Battel where *Simon Monfort* did command as chief of the *Crusade*.

From hence we may gather why the Monks were so angry at these *Singers* and *Jesters*. And did not like that the King should be so familiar with them.

One of them with King *Richard* was *Anselm Faydet*, of whom *Petrarch*.

——*Anselmo*

*& mille altri ne vidi: a cui la lingua  
Lancia & spada fu sempre, & scudo & elmo*

*I saw, with many others, Anselm there,  
Whose tongue was shield and helmet, sword and spear.*

This *Anselm* was wont to write *Comedies*, and *Tragedies*; which in his own Country he could sell for 2 or 3000 *livres Turnois*; and some for more: And had several acted at his own charge. After King *Richards* death, he married a Nun, a Dame of quality, out of a Nunnery at *Aix*. And after went to live with the Marquess of *Monferrat*, who took part with the Count of *Tholouse*: And to him *Anselm* ventur'd to show a *Comedy*; which till then he had kept secret from every body: and there had it acted.

In one of his Poems he describes the Palace of *Love*, his Court, his State, his Power, which *Petrarch* chang'd, and fashion'd to his mind; and calls it, in his Book, *il triumfo di amore*.

Another of these *Jesters* was *Fouchet* of *Marseilles*, who upon

the death of King *Richard*, went home, turn'd Monk, and rose to be Archbishop of *Tholouse*. *Dante* has him in his *Paradise*, and *Petrarch* of him thus

*Folchetto: ch'a Marsilia il nome ha dato,  
& a Genova tolto: & al' estremo  
Cangio, per miglior patria, habito & stato.*

Another of these (with *Jeffrey King Richard's* Brother) was *Jeffrey Rudel*, of whom *Petrarch*,

*Gianfre Rudel, ch' uso la vela e'l remo  
A cercar la sua morte——*

Whilst this Poet was with our Prince *Jeffrey*, he was told, by Pilgrims that came from the *Holy Land*, so many fine things of the *Countess of Tripoly*, that he could stay no longer.

He puts on a Pilgrims Weeds, takes a Voyage to *Tripoly*, fell sick by the way, and ere he came a-shore was almost dead. The *Countess* inform'd of this *Errantry*, went to the Ship, took him by the hand. He opened his Eyes, said, *Having seen her, he was satisfied*; so departed this life.

She made for him a most splendid Funeral, provided him a Tomb of *Porphyry*, and his Epitaph in Arabick Verse: And had his Sonnets all curiously copied over, and illumin'd, with Letters of Gold; was taken with Melancholy, and turned Nun: One of the Songs made in his Voyage, was this:

*Yrat, & dolent m'en partray  
s'yeu non vey est' amour de luench.  
e non say qu' ouras la veyray,  
car son trop nostras terras luench.*

*Dieu que fes tout quant veu, e vay:  
e form' á quest' amour de luench,  
my don poder al cor, car hay  
esper vezer l' amour de luench.*

*Segnour, tenes my per veray,  
l' amour qu' ay vers ella de luench.  
car per un ben que m'en eschai  
ha mille mals tant soy de luench.*

*Ja d'autre amour non janziray*

*s'yeu nen jau dest' amour de luench.  
 q'una plus bella non en sa  
 en luec que sia, ny pres, ny luench.*

*Sad and heavy should I part,  
 but for this Love so far away;  
 not knowing what my ways may thwart,  
 my Native Land so far away.  
 Thou that of all things Maker art,  
 and form'st this Love so far away;  
 give body's strength, then shan't I start,  
 from seeing her so far away.  
 How true a Love to pure desert,  
 my Love to her so far away!  
 eas'd once, a thousand times I smart,  
 whilst, ah! she is so far away.  
 None other Love, none other Dart  
 I feel, but hers so far away,  
 but fairer never touch'd an heart,  
 than hers that is so far away.*

## CHAP. VI

*Savery de Mauleon a Provencial Poet. Testimony of him. King R. I. His Verses when Prisoner in Austria. The Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. His Poetry. Ramond Beringhier. Four Daughters, four Queens. Rob. Grosthead. His Provencial Poetry. Other Languages stubborn. Chaucer refin'd our English. Which in perfection by Waller. His Poem on the Navy Royal, beyond all Modern Poetry in any Language. Before him our Poets better expressed their thoughts in Latin. Whence Hoveden might mistake, and his Malice. A Translation from Grosthead. The Harp a Musick then in fashion. Five Tragedies from Joan Queen of Naples. Forreigners all call'd French. Plays by the Parish-Clerks of London. What under H. VIII. flourish under Queen Elizabeth. The Gorboduck. French much behind-hand with us. Tragedy, with us, but a shadow.*



*Savery de Mauleon*, mentioned in our English Histories, is reckoned another of these *Provincial Poets*; of him an old \*Bard, amongst them, gave this Testimony:

*Doussament fait motz & sos  
ab amor que' m' a vencut.*

*Sweetly could he say and sing  
of Love, that me hath vanquished.*

And the same Author says of King *Richard*,

*Coblas a teira faire adroitement  
pou vos oillez enten dompna gentilz.*

*Stanza's he trimly could invent,  
upon the Eyes of Lady gent.*

One *Stanza*, of a Song made by him, when a Prisoner in *Austria*, may serve for a taste.

*Or sachan ben mos homs, e mos Barons,  
Anglez, Normans, Peytavins, e Gascons;  
qu'yeu non ay ja si paure Compagnon,  
que per aver lou laissess' en preson.*

*Know ye, my Men, my Barons all,  
In England, and in Normandy,  
In Poictiers, and in Gascony,  
I no Companion held so small,  
To let him thus in durance lie.*

Our King *Richard* had not the Expedient of the French King *St. Lewis*, who, taken Prisoner by the Sarazens, pawn'd the Eucharist, body for body, to the Infidels for his Ransom.

Signior *Redi*, now with the great Duke of *Tuscany*, tells us the Mss. with King *Richard's* Poetry,† and many other of the *Provincial Poets* are in his keeping.

This of the Emperor *Frederick I.* is currant every where.

*Plas my Cavallier Francez,  
e la donna Catallana,*

\* *Guilhem Briton.* MSS. with Signior *Redi.*

† *Redi Dithyrambick.*

*e l'ourar Gynoez,  
e la Cour de Kastellana,  
lou Kantar Provensales,  
e la dansa Trivyzana,  
e la corps Arrogoniez  
e la perla Julliana,  
les mans e Kara d'Angles,  
e lou donzel de Thuscana.*

*I like in France the Chivalry.  
The Catalonian Lass for me,  
The Genoes for working well,  
But for a Court commend Castile.  
For Song, no Countrey to Provance,  
And Treves must carry't for a dance.  
The finest shapes in Arragon,  
In Juliers they speak in Tune.  
The English for an hand and face,  
For Boys, troth, Tuscany's the place.*

They who have written the lives of the Provencial Poets, with King *Richard*, and the Emperor *Frederick Barbarossa*, give us also the life of *Ramond* Count of *Provence*, memorable for his four Daughters, married to so many Kings. *Margaret*, to *Lewis* King of *France*. *Elionor* to our *H. III. Sance*, to *Richard* King of the Romans, *Beatrice* to *Charles* King of *Naples* and *Sicily*. On this occasion, thus *Dante*.

*Quattro figlie hebbe, & Ciascuna reina  
Ramondo Beringhieri.——*

*Four lovely Daughters, each of them a Queen,  
Had Ramond Beringher.——*

Neither were the Churchmen all of the same Kidney with the Monks: as may be gather'd from the famous Bishop of *Lincoln Rob. Grosthead*; the most eminent in his time for Piety and Learning, and the Man of greatest Authority, who when living made the old Gentleman in *St. Peters* Chair tremble, and the bare Ghost of him, afterwards so thumpt off the Pope, that he died of the contu-

sion. He compos'd several treatises in this Provencial Ryme and Language. One of them, in *Bodleys Library*, bears this title:

*Tractatus in lingua Romana secundum Dom. Rob. Grosseteste  
Lincoln Ep. de Principio Creationis Mundi.*

The beginning is this:

*Ki pense ben, ben peut dire:  
Sanz penser ne poet soffire  
De nul bon oure Comencer  
Deu nos doint de li penser  
De ki, par ki, en ki sont  
Toz les bens ki font el mond.*

*He that thinks well, well can say:  
Without thinking, nought he may:  
Not a good work once begin.  
God wou'd have us think of him:  
From whom, by whom, in whom are all  
The good things which the World we call.*

This *Provencial* was the first, of the modern languages, that yielded and chim'd in with the musick and sweetness of ryme; which making its way by *Savoy* to *Monferat*; The *Italians* thence began to file their *volgare*; And to set their verses all after the Chimes of *Provence*. Our Inter-marriages, and our Dominions thereabouts, brought us much sooner acquainted with their Tongue and Poetry. And they, with us, that would write verse, as King *Richard*, *Savery de Mauleon*, and *Rob. Grostead*, finding the English stubborn and unweildy, fell readily to that of *Provence*, as more glib, and lighter on the Tongue. But they who attempted verse in English, down till *Chaucers* time, made an heavy pudder, and are always miserably put to't for a word to clink: which commonly fall so awkward, and unexpectedly as dropping from the Clouds by some Machine or Miracle.

*Chaucer* found an Herculean labour on his Hands; And did perform to Admiration. He seizes all Provencal, French or Latin that came in his way, gives them a new garb and livery, and mingles them amongst our English: turns out English, gowty, or superan-

nuated, to place in their room the foreigners, fit for service, train'd and accustomed to Poetical Discipline.

But tho' the Italian reformation was begun and finished well nigh at the same time by *Boccace*, *Dante*, and *Petrarch*. Our language retain'd something of the churl; something of the Stiff and Gothish did stick upon it, till long after *Chaucer*.

*Chaucer* threw in Latin, French, Provencial, and other Languages, like new Stum to raise a Fermentation; In Queen *Elizabeth's* time it grew fine, but came not to an Head and Spirit, did not shine and sparkle till Mr. *Waller* set it a running. And one may observe by his Poem on the Navy, *An. 1632.* that Not the language only, but His Poetry then distinguish'd him from all his contemporaries, both in *England* and in other Nations; And from all before him upwards to *Horace* and *Virgil*. For there, besides the Language Clean and Majestick, the Thoughts new, and noble; the Verse sweet, smooth, full and strong; the turn of the Poem is happy to Admiration. The first line, with all that follow in order, leads to the conclusion, all bring to the same point and centre,

*To his own chosen more indulgent, He  
Dares trust such power with so much piety.*

Here is both *Homer* and *Virgil*; the *fortis Achilles*, and the *pious Æneas*, in the person he Compliments, and the greatness is owing to his Vertue. The Thought and Application is most Natural, Just, and true in Poetry, tho' in fact, and really, He might have no more fortitude or piety, than another body. For the repairing then of *Pauls* gave a reasonable colour for his Piety; And that Navy Royal might well give him the pre-eminence in power, above *Achilles*. whoever before that time, tryed the same thoughts in Latin and in English verse; the former always had the advantage; the expression being more lively, free, elegant, and easie: Whereas in the English some thing or other was still amiss; force or affectation, poverty or superfluity mangling or disguising, pinching or encombring it.

Amongst the names for these *Provencial* Poets in their own Countrey, they were call'd *Troubadours*, *Jeongleors*, and *Chanterres*, the last word is not forreign to our Cathedrals, the second *Roger Hoveden* render'd *Joculatores*, as we may turn the first to Trompeters, but the *Troubadours*, or *Troverres* were so named

from their Invention, as we say *tresor troue*, and the Italians call them *Trovatore*; And *Jongleors* was given them from some Musical instrument then in use, as the Greek or Latin, that were call'd *Lyrick* Poets. So our *Rob. of Grosthead* might then be a *Jongleur*, from his delight in the Harp, as we find in a preface to one of his Books in *Bodleys Library*, part of which is this.

For lewed men y undyrtoke,  
In Englysh Tonge to make this Boke;

For many beyn of seeche manere  
That Talys and Rymys wyle blethly here,  
In Gamys and Festys and at the ale  
Love men to lestene trotonale.

To alle Crystyn men under Sunne  
And to gode men of Brunne,

And specially alle by name  
The felawshepe of Symprynghame  
Robert of Brunne gretyth zow.

The Pers of Grace fyl than to be  
A thousand and thre hundred and thre

Þn that tyme turned ey thys  
In English Tonge out of Frankys.

I shall zow telle as y have herd  
Of the bysshop Seynt Roberd

Hys name ys Grosteste  
Of Lyncolne so seyth the geste

He lovede moche to here the Harp——

The Harp, it seems, was in reputation at that time; And in *Provence* might be no hindrance to their matters of Piety; nor be ill Musick for the *Albigenses*, and the *Heresie of Lions*. They had their Godly Romances, their *Turnement of Antichrist*, and *Fantamarie del Paganismo*, and the like. Some wrote the Wars and Prowess of several Kings and Princes, the King of *Arles* against the

Saracens, *la guerra delli Baulsensi*, the War of the Princes of *Baulx* (the Prince of *Orange's* Family, &c.) but Comedy and Tragedy was what most of them offer'd at in their way.

The famous *Joan*, Queen of *Naples*, gave subject, to one of the last of those Poëts, for five Tragedies: call'd by him, 1. The *Andreassa*. 2. The *Taranta*. 3. The *Maiorichina*. 4. The *Alemanna*, from *Andreas*, from a Prince of *Taranto*, a Prince of *Maiorca*, a German Prince (of the House of *Brunswick*) her four Husbands, murder'd by her. 5. *Giovannella*, from her own just and ignominious catastrophe.

By all this History we see the assertion of *Campanella* was not without foundation. And for the same cause our Monks might well be jealous of King *Richard*, and dislike in our other Kings, about that time, their great Correspondence and Alliances in *Provence*.

So the great cry in *Henry* the III. time (who with his Brother *Richard*, had Married two of the Daughters of that Count of *Provence*, was against the *French*: (by that name noting all Forreigners.——)

**\* To remue the frensse men to libbe beyond se,  
Bi hor londs her and ther, and ne come noght age.**

**And to granti God laws and the old Charter also,  
That so ofte was igranted er, and so ofte undo.**

And yet from this Marriage, sprang those our Kings which afterwards conquered *France*.

These reflections have drawn me too far beyond my purpose, which was only to treat of dramattick representations. †Of which kind *Stow* tells us that in the time of *R. II. An. 1391.* the *Parish Clerks* of *London* Acted a Play at the *Skinners Well* by *Smithfield*, which lasted three days; and was of Matters from *Adam* and *Eve*. And in *H. IV. his time, Ann. 1409.* another was represented at the same place, which held eight days.

From this, and what was noted before in *France* and *Italy*, we may gather that the *Old Testament*, *Christs Passion*, and the *Acts of the Apostles*, were the ordinary entertainment on the Stage, all *Europe* over, for an hundred year or two, of our greatest ignorance

\* *Rob. Gloc. Mss. Cotton.*

† *Survey of London.*



and darkness. But that in *England* we had been used to another sort of Plays in the beginning of *H. VIII.* Reign may be seen from that of the \**Laureat* on Cardinal woolsey:

Like *Hahound* in a *Play*;  
No man dare him with say.

And in the same reign we find printed the Interludes of *John Heywood*. But early under Queen *Elizabeth*, our dramattick Poetry grew to something of a just symmetry and proportion. In 1566. *Geo. Gascoigne* of *Grays-Inn* translated the *Supposes*, from *Ariosto*, which was there acted: as also his *Jocasta* Englished from *Euripides*, the Epilogue written by *Chr. Yelverton*.

And after that were reckon'd for Comedy, *Edward* Earl of *Oxford*; for Tragedy amongst others, *Thomas* Lord of *Buchurst*, whose *Gorboduck* is a fable, doubtless, better turn'd for Tragedy, than any on this side the *Alps* in his time; and might have been a better direction to *Shakespear* and *Ben. Johnson* than any guide they have had the luck to follow.

*Here is a King, the Queen, and their two Sons. The King divides his Realm, and gives it betwixt his two Sons. They quarrel. The Elder Brother Kills the Younger. Which provokes the Mother to Kill the Elder. Thereupon the King Kills the Mother, And then to make a clear Stage the people rise and dispatch old Gorboduck.*

It is objected by our Neighbours against the English, that we delight in bloody spectacles. Our Poets who have not imitated *Gorboduck* in the regularity and roundness of the design, have not failed on the Theatre to give us the *atrocité* and blood, enough in all Conscience. From this time Dramattick Poetry began to thrive with us, and flourish wonderfully. The French confess they had nothing in this kind considerable till 1635. that the Academy Royal was founded. Long before which time we had from *Shakespear*, *Fletcher*, and *Ben. Johnson* whole Volumes; at this day in possession of the Stage, and acted with greater applause than ever. Yet after all, I fear what *Quintilian* pronounced concerning the Roman Comedy, may as justly be said of English Tragedy: *In Tragædia maxime claudicamus, vix levem consequimur umbram*. In Tragedy we come short extreamly; hardly have we a slender shadow of it.

\* *Skelton*.

## CHAP. VII

*Othello. More of a piece. In Tragedy four parts. Fable, the Poets part. Cinthio's Novels. Othello altered for the worse. Marriage, absurd, forbidden by Horace. Fable of Othello. Use and Application. Othello's Love-powder. High-German Doctor. Venetians odd taste of things. Their Women fools. Employ Strangers. Hate the Moors. Characters. Nothing of the Moor in Othello, of a Venetian in Desdemona. Of a Souldier in Jago. The Souldiers Character, by Horace. What by Shakespear. Agamemnon. Venetians no sense of Jealousie. Thoughts, in Othello, in a Horse, or Mastiff, more sensibly exprest. Ill Manners. Outragious to a Nobleman, to Humanity. Address, in telling bad news. In Princes Courts. In Aristophanes. In Rabalais. Venetian Senate. Their Wisdom.*

From all the Tragedies acted on our English Stage, *Othello* is said to bear the Bell away. The *Subject* is more of a piece, and there is indeed something like, there is, as it were, some phantom of a *Fable*. The *Fable* is always accounted the *Soul* of Tragedy. And it is the *Fable* which is properly the *Poets* part. Because the other three parts of Tragedy, to wit the *Characters* are taken from the Moral Philosopher; the *thoughts* or sence, from them that teach *Rhetorick*: And the last part, which is the *expression*, we learn from the Grammarians.

This *Fable* is drawn from a Novel, compos'd in Italian by *Giraldi Cinthio*, who also was a Writer of Tragedies. And to that use employ'd such of his Tales, as he judged proper for the Stage. But with this of the *Moor*, he meddl'd no farther.

*Shakespear* alters it from the Original in several particulars, but always, unfortunately, for the worse. He bestows a name on his *Moor*; and styles him the Moor of *Venice*: a Note of pre-eminence, which neither History nor Heraldry can allow him. *Cinthio*, who knew him best, and whose creature he was, calls him simply a *Moor*. We say the Piper of *Strasburgh*; the Jew of *Florence*; And, if you please, the Pindar of *Wakefield*: all upon Record, and memor-

able in their Places. But we see no such Cause for the *Moors* preferment to that dignity. And it is an affront to all Chroniclers, and Antiquaries, to top upon 'um a *Moor*, with that mark of renown, who yet had never faln within the Sphere of their Cognisance.

Then is the *Moors Wife*, from a simple Citizen, in *Cinthio*, dress'd up with her Top knots, and rais'd to be *Desdemona*, a Senators Daughter. All this is very strange; And therefore pleases such as reflect not on the improbability. This match might well be without the Parents Consent. Old *Horace* long ago forbad the Banes.

*Sed non ut placidis Coeant immitia, non ut  
Serpentes avibus gementur, tigribus agni.*

### The Fable.

*Othello, a Blackmoor Captain, by talking of his Prowess and Feats of War, makes Desdemona a Senators Daughter to be in love with him; and to be married to him, without her Parents knowledge; And having preferred Cassio, to be his Lieutenant, (a place which his Ensign Jago sued for) Jago in revenge, works the Moor into a Jealousy that Cassio Cuckolds him: which he effects by stealing and conveying a certain Handkerchief, which had, at the Wedding, been by the Moor presented to his Bride. Hereupon, Othello and Jago plot the Deaths of Desdemona and Cassio, Othello Murders her, and soon after is convinced of her Innocence. And as he is about to be carried to Prison, in order to be punish'd for the Murder, He kills himself.*

What ever rubs or difficulty may stick on the Bark, the Moral, sure, of this Fable is very instructive.

1. First, This may be a caution to all Maidens of Quality how, without their Parents consent, they run away with Blackamoors.

*Di non si accompagnare con huomo, cui la natura & il cielo, & il modo della vita, disgiunge da noi.* Cinthio.

Secondly, This may be a warning to all good Wives, that they look well to their Linnen.

Thirdly, This may be a lesson to Husbands, that before their Jealousie be Tragical, the proofs may be Mathematical.

*Cinthio* affirms that *She was not overcome by a Womanish Ap-*

*petite, but by the Vertue of the Moor.* It must be a good-natur'd Reader that takes *Cinthio's* word in this case, tho' in a Novel. *Shakespear*, who is accountable both to the *Eyes*, and to the *Ears*, And to convince the very heart of an Audience, shews that *Desdemona* was won, by hearing *Othello* talk,

Othello.

—*I spake of most disastrous chances,  
of Moving accidents, by flood and field;  
of hair-breadth scapes i' th' imminent deadly breach;  
of being taken by the insolent foe;  
and sold to slavery: of my redemption thence;  
and portents in my Travels History:  
wherein of Antars vast, and Desarts idle,  
rough Quarries, Rocks, and Hills, whose heads touch Heaven,  
It was my hint to speak, such was my process:  
and of the Cannibals that each others eat:  
the Anthropophagi, and men whose heads  
do grow beneath their shoulders——* <I, iii, 134–45>

This was the Charm, this was the philtre, the love-powder that took the Daughter of this Noble Venetian. This was sufficient to make the Black-amoor White, and reconcile all, tho' there had been a Cloven-foot into the bargain.

A meaner woman might be as soon taken by *Aqua Tetrachymaggon*.

*Nodes, Cataracts, Tumours, Chilblains, Carnosity, Shankers*, or any *Cant* in the Bill of an High-German Doctor is as good *fustian Circumstance*, and as likely to charm a Senators Daughter. But, it seems, the noble Venetians have an other sence of things. The *Doge* himself tells us;

Doge. *I think this Tale wou'd win my Daughter too.*

<I, iii, 171>

Horace tells us,

*Intererit Multum——*

*Colchus an Assyrius, Thebis nutritus, an Argis.*

*Shakespear* in this Play calls 'em the *supersubtle venetians*. Yet examine throughout the Tragedy there is nothing in the noble *Desdemona*, that is not below any Countrey Chamber-maid with us.

And the account he gives of their Noblemen and Senate, can only be calculated for the latitude of *Gotham*.

The Character of that State is to employ strangers in their Wars; But shall a Poet thence fancy that they will set a Negro to be their General; or trust a *Moor* to defend them against the *Turk*? With us a Black-amoor might rise to be a Trumpeter; but *Shakespear* would not have him less than a Lieutenant-General. With us a *Moor* might marry some little drab, or Small-coal Wench: *Shake-spear*, would provide him the Daughter and Heir of some great Lord, or Privy-Councillor: And all the Town should reckon it a very suitable match: Yet the English are not bred up with that hatred and aversion to the *Moors*, as are the Venetians, who suffer by a perpetual Hostility from them,

*Littora littoribus contraria*——

Nothing is more odious in Nature than an improbable lye; And, certainly, never was any Play fraught, like this of *Othello*, with improbabilities.

The *Characters* or Manners, which are the second part in a Tragedy, are not less unnatural and improper, than the Fable was improbable and absurd.

*Othello* is made a Venetian General. We see nothing done by him, nor related concerning him, that comports with the condition of a General, or, indeed, of a Man, unless the killing himself, to avoid a death the Law was about to inflict upon him. When his Jealousy had wrought him up to a resolution of's taking revenge for the suppos'd injury, He sets *Jago* to the fighting part, to kill *Cassio*; And chuses himself to murder the silly Woman his Wife, that was like to make no resistance.

His Love and his Jealousie are no part of a Souldiers Character, unless for Comedy.

But what is most intolerable is *Jago*. He is no Black-amoor Souldier, so we may be sure he should be like other Souldiers of our acquaintance; yet never in Tragedy, nor in Comedy, nor in Nature was a Souldier with his Character; take it in the Authors own words;

Em. ———some *Eternal Villain*,  
*Some busie, and insinuating Rogue*,  
*Some cogging, couzening Slave, to get some Office.*

<IV, ii, 131–3>

Horace Describes a Souldier otherwise:

*Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer.*

Shakespear knew his Character of *Jago* was inconsistent. In this very Play he pronounces,

*If thou dost deliver more or less than Truth,*  
*Thou are no Souldier.*——

<II, iii, 211–12>

This he knew, but to entertain the Audience with something new and surprising, against common sense, and Nature, he would pass upon us a close, dissembling, false, insinuating rascal, instead of an open-hearted, frank, plain-dealing Souldier, a character constantly worn by them for some thousands of years in the World.

\**Tiberius Cæsar* had a Poet Arraign'd for his Life: because *Agamemnon* was brought on the Stage by him, with a character unbecoming a Souldier.

Our *Ensigns* and Subalterns, when disgusted by the Captain, throw up their Commissions, bluster, and are bare-fac'd. *Jago*, I hope, is not brought on the Stage, in a Red Coat. I know not what Livery the Venetians wear: but am sure they hold not these conditions to be *alla soldatesca*.

*Non sia egli per fare la vendetta con insidie, ma con la spada in mano.* Cinthio.

Nor is our Poet more discreet in his *Desdemona*, He had chosen a Souldier for his Knave: And a Venetian Lady is to be the Fool.

This Senators Daughter runs away to (a Carriers Inn) the *Sagittary*, with a Black-amoor: is no sooner wedded to him, but the very night she Beds him, is importuning and teizing him for a young smock-fac'd Lieutenant, *Cassio*. And tho' she perceives the *Moor* Jealous of *Cassio*, yet will she not forbear, but still rings *Cassio*, *Cassio* in both his Ears.

*Roderigo* is the Cully of *Jago*, brought in to be murder'd by *Jago*,

\* *Sueton* in *Tib*.



that *Jago's* hands might be the more in Blood, and be yet the more abominable Villain: who without that was too wicked on all Conscience; And had more to answer for, than any Tragedy, or Furies could inflict upon him. So there can be nothing in the *characters*, either for the profit, or to delight an Audience.

The third thing to be consider'd is the *Thoughts*. But from such *Characters*, we need not expect many that are either true, or fine, or noble.

And without these, that is, without sense or meaning, the fourth part of Tragedy, which is the *expression* can hardly deserve to be treated on distinctly. The verse rumbling in our Ears are of good use to help off the action.

In the *Neighing* of an Horse, or in the *growling* of a Mastiff, there is a meaning, there is as lively expression, and, may I say, more humanity, than many times in the Tragical flights of *Shakespear*.

Step then amongst the Scenes to observe the Conduct in this Tragedy.

The first we see are *Jago* and *Roderigo*, by Night in the Streets of *Venice*. After growling a long time together, they resolve to tell *Brabantio* that his Daughter is run away with the Black-a-moor. *Jago* and *Roderigo* were not of quality to be familiar with *Brabantio*, nor had any provocation from him, to deserve a rude thing at their hands. *Brabantio* was a Noble Venetian one of the Sovereign Lords, and principal persons in the Government, Peer to the most Serene *Doge*, one attended with more state, ceremony and punctilio, than any English Duke, or Nobleman in the Government will pretend to. This misfortune in his Daughter is so prodigious, so tender a point, as might puzzle the finest Wit of the most *supersubtle* Venetian to touch upon it, or break the discovery to her Father. See then how delicately *Shakespear* minces the matter:

Rod. *What ho, Brabantio, Signior Brabantio, ho.*

Jago. *Awake, what ho, Brabantio,*

*Thieves, thieves, thieves:*

*Look to your House, your Daughter, and your Bags*

*Thieves, thieves.*

*Brabantio* at a Window.

Bra. *What is the reason of this terrible summons?*

*What is the matter there?*

*Rod. Signior, is all your Family within?*

*Jago. Are your Doors lockt?*

*Bra. Why, wherefore ask you this?*

*Jago. Sir, you are robb'd, for shame put on your Gown,  
Your Heart is burst, you have lost half your Soul,*

*Even now, very now, an old black Ram*

*It tuppung your white Ewe: arise, arise,*

*Awake the snorting Citizens with the Bell,*

*Or else the Devil will make a Grandsire of you, arise I say.*

<I, i, 79-93>

Nor have they yet done, amongst other ribaldry, they tell him.

*Jago. Sir, you are one of those that will not serve God, if the  
Devil bid you; because we come to do you service, you think  
us Ruffians, you'll have your Daughter covered with a Bar-  
bary Stallion. You'll have your Nephews neigh to you; you'll  
have Coursers for Cousins, and Gennets for Germans.*

*Bra. What prophane wretch art thou?*

*Jago. I am one, Sir, that come to tell you, your Daughter and  
the Moor, are now making the Beast with two backs.*

<I, i, 109-18>

In former days there wont to be kept at the Courts of Princes some body in a Fools Coat, that in pure simplicity might let slip something, which made way for the ill news, and blunted the shock, which otherwise might have come too violent upon the party.

*Aristophanes* puts *Nicias* and *Demosthenes* into the disguise of Servants, that they might, without indecency, be Drunk; And Drunk he must make them that they might without reserve lay open the *Arcana* of State; And the Knavery of their *Ministers*.

After King *Francis* had been taken Prisoner at *Pavia*. *Rabelais* tells of a Drunken bout between *Gargantua* and Fryer *John*; where the valiant Fryer, bragging over his Cups, amongst his other flights, says he, *Had I liv'd in the days of Jesus Christ, I would ha' guarded Mount Olivet that the Jews should never ha' tane him. The Devil fetch me, if I would not have ham string'd those Mr. Apostles, that after their good Supper, ran away so scurvily and left their Master*

to shift for himself. I hate a Man should run away, when he should play at sharps. Pox on't, that I shou'd not be King of France for an hundred years or two. I wou'd curtail all our French Dogs that ran away at Pavia.

This is address, this is truly Satyr, where the preparation is such, that the thing principally design'd, falls in, as it only were of course.

But *Shakespear* shews us another sort of address, his manners and good breeding must not be like the rest of the Civil World. *Brabantio* was not in Masquerade, was not *incognito*; *Jago* well knew his rank and dignity.

*Jago. The Magnifico is much beloved,  
And hath in his effect, a voice potential  
As double as the Duke——* <I, ii, 12–14>

But besides the Manners to a *Magnifico*, humanity cannot bear that an old Gentleman in his misfortune should be insulted over with such a rabble of Skoundrel language, when no cause or provocation. Yet thus it is on our Stage, this is our School of good manners, and the *Speculum Vitæ*.

But our *Magnifico* is here in the dark, nor are yet his Robes on: attend him to the Senate house, and there see the difference, see the effects of Purple.

So, by and by, we find the Duke of *Venice* with his Senators in Council, at Midnight, upon advice that the Turks, or Ottamites, or both together, were ready in transport Ships, put to Sea, in order to make a Descent upon *Cyprus*. This is the posture, when we see *Brabantio*, and *Othello* join them. By their Conduct and manner of talk, a body must strain hard to fancy the Scene at *Venice*; And not rather in some of our Cinq-ports, where the Baily and his Fisher-men are knocking their heads together on account of some Whale; or some terrible broil upon the Coast. But to shew them true Venetians, the Maritime affairs stick not long on their hand; the publick may sink or swim. They will sit up all night to hear a Doctors Commons, Matrimonial, Cause. And have the Merits of the Cause at large laid open to 'em, that they may decide it before they Stir. What can be pleaded to keep awake their attention so wonderfully?

Never, sure, was *form of pleading* so tedious and so heavy, as this

whole Scene, and midnight entertainment. Take his own words: says the *Respondent*.

*Oth. Most potent, grave, and reverend Signiors,  
My very noble, and approv'd good Masters:  
That I have tane away this old mans Daughter;  
It is most true: true, I have Married her,  
The very front and head of my offending,  
Hath this extent, no more: rude I am in my speech.  
And little blest with the set phrase of peace,  
For since these Arms of mine had seven years pith,  
Till now some nine Moons wasted, they have us'd  
Their dearest action in the Tented Field:  
And little of this great World can I speak,  
More than pertains to Broils and Battail,  
And therefore little shall I grace my Cause,  
In speaking of my self; yet by your gracious patience  
I would a round unravish'd Tale deliver,  
Of my whole course of love, what drugs, what charms  
What Conjuraton, and what mighty Magick,  
(for such proceedings am I charg'd withal)  
I won his Daughter.*

<I, iii, 76-94>

All this is but *Preamble*, to tell the Court that He wants words. This was the Eloquence which kept them up all Night, and drew their attention, in the midst of their alarms.

One might rather think the novelty, and strangeness of the case prevail'd upon them: no, the Senators do not reckon it strange at all. Instead of starting at the Prodigy, every one is familiar with *Desdemona*, as he were her own natural Father, rejoice in her good fortune, and wish their own several Daughters as hopefully married. Should the Poet have provided such a Husband for an only Daughter of any noble Peer in *England*, the Black-amoor must have chang'd his Skin, to look our House of Lords in the Face.

*Æschylus* is noted in *Aristophanes* for letting *Niobe* be two or three *Acts* on the Stage, before she speaks. Our Noble Venetian, sure, is in the other more unnatural extreme. His words flow in abundance; no Butter-Quean can be more lavish. Nay: he is for talking of State-Affairs too, above any body:

Bra. *Please it your Grace, on to the State Affairs——*

<I, iii, 190>

Yet is this *Brabantio* sensible of his affliction; before the end of the Play his Heart breaks, he dies.

Gra. *Poor Desdemona, I am glad thy Father's dead,  
Thy match was mortal to him, and pure grief  
Shore his old thread in twain——*

<V, ii, 207–9>

A third part in a Tragedy is the *Thoughts*: from Venetians, Noblemen, and Senators, we may expect fine *Thoughts*. Here is a tryal of skill: for a parting blow, the *Duke*, and *Brabantio* Cap sentences. Where then shall we seek for the *Thoughts*, if we let slip this occasion? says the Duke:

Duk. *Let me speak like your self and lay a Sentence,  
Which like a greese or step, may help these lovers  
Into your favour.*

*When remedies are past the grief is ended,  
By seeing the worst which late on hopes depended,  
To mourn a mischief that is past and gone,  
Is the next way to draw more mischief on;  
What cannot be preserv'd when Fortune takes,  
Patience her injury a Mocker makes.*

*The rob'd that smiles, steals something from a Thief,  
He robs himself, that spends an hopeless grief.*

Bra. *So let the Turk of Cyprus us beguile  
We lose it not so long as we can smile;*

*He bears the sentence well, that nothing bears  
But the free comfort which from thence he hears,  
But he bears both the sentence and the sorrow,  
That to pay grief must of poor patience borrow:*

*These Sentences to Sugar, or to Gall,  
Being strong on both sides are equivocal.*

*But words are words, I never yet did hear,  
That the bruis'd Heart was pierced through the Ear.*

*Beseech you now to the affairs of State. <I, iii, 199–220>*

How far wou'd the Queen of *Sheba* have travell'd to hear the Wisdom of our Noble Venetians? or is not our \**Brentford* a *Venetian* Colony, for methinks their talk is the very same?

What says Prince *Volscius*?

*Volscius.* *What shall I do, what conduct shall I find  
To lead me through this twy light of my mind?*

What says *Amaryllis*?

*Ama.* *I hope its slow beginning will portend  
A forward exit to all future end.*

What says Prince *Pretty-man*?

*Pre.* *Was ever Son yet brought to this distress,  
To be, for being a Son, made Fatherless?  
Ah, you just Gods, rob me not of a Father,  
The being of a Son take from me rather.*

*Panurge*, sadly perplexed, and trying all the means in the World, to be well advised, in that knotty point *whether he should Marry, or no*; Amongst the rest, consults *Raminigrobis*, an old Poet; as one belonging to *Apollo*; And from whom he might expect something like an Oracle. And he was not disappointed. From *Raminigrobis* he had this Answer:

*Prenez la, ne la prenez pas.  
Si vous la prenez, c'est bien fait.  
Si ne la prenez, en effet  
Ce sera ouvre par compas.  
Gallopez, mais allez le pas.  
Recullez, entrés y de fait.  
Prenez la, ne.*

*Take, or not take her, off or on:  
Handy dandy is your Lot.  
When her name you write, you blot.  
'Tis undone, when all is done,  
Ended, ere it is begun.*



*Never Gallop whilst you Trot.  
Set not forward, when you run,  
Nor be single, tho' alone,  
Take, or not take her, off, or on.*

What provocation, or cause of malice our Poet might have to Libel the most *Serene Republick*, I cannot tell: but certainly, there can be no wit in this representation.

For the *Second Act*, our Poet having dispatcht his affairs at *Venice*, shews the Action next (I know not how many leagues off) in the Island of *Cyprus*. The Audience must be there too: And yet our *Bays* had it never in his head, to make any provision of Transport Ships for them.

In the days that the *Old Testament* was Acted in *Clerkenwell*, by the *Parish Clerks* of *London*, the Israelites might pass through the *Red sea*: but alas, at this time, we have no *Moses* to bid the Waters *make way*, and to Usher us along. Well, the absurdities of this kind break no Bones. They may make Fools of us; but do not hurt our Morals.

Come a-shoar then, and observe the Countenance of the People, after the dreadful Storm, and their apprehensions from an Invasion by the Ottomites, their succour and friends scatter'd and tost, no body knew whither. The first that came to Land was *Cassio*, his first Salutation to the Governour, *Montanio*, is:

*Cas. Thanks to the valiant of this Isle:  
That so approve the Moor, and let the Heavens  
Give him defence against their Elements,  
For I have lost him on the dangerous Sea.*

<II, i, 43-6>

To him the Governour speaks, indeed, like a Man in his wits.

*Mont. Is he well Shipt?*

The Lieutenant answers thus.

*Cas. His Bark is stoutly Tymber'd, and his Pilot  
Of very expert, and approv'd allowance,  
Therefore my hopes (not surfeited to death)  
Stand in bold care.*

<II, i, 47-51>

The Governours first question was very proper; his next question, in this posture of affairs, is:

Mont. *But, good Lieutenant, is our general Wiv'd?*

<II, i, 60>

A question so remote, so impertinent and absurd, so odd and surprising never entered *Bayes's Pericranium*. Only the answer may Tally with it.

Cas. *Most fortunately, he hath atcheiv'd a Maid,  
That Parragons description, and wild fame:  
One that excels the quirks of blasoning Pens:  
And in the essential vesture of Creation,  
Does bear an excellency——*

<II, i, 61–5>

They who like this Authors writing will not be offended to find so much repeated from him. I pretend not here to tax either the *Sense*, or the *Language*; those *Circumstances* had their proper place in the Venetian Senate. What I now cite is to shew how probable, how natural, how reasonable the Conduct is, all along.

I thought it enough that *Cassio* should be acquainted with a Virgin of that rank and consideration in *Venice*, as *Desdemona*. I wondred that in the Senate-house every one should know her so familiarly: yet, here also at *Cyprus*, every body is in a rapture at the name of *Desdemona*: except only *Montanio* who must be ignorant; that *Cassio*, who has an excellent cut in shaping an Answer, may give him the satisfaction:

Mont. *What is she?*

Cas. *She that I spoke of: our Captains Captain,  
Left in the Conduct of the bold Iago,  
Whose footing here anticipates our thoughts  
A Sennets speed: great Jove Othello guard,  
And swell his Sail with thine own powerful breath,  
That he may bless this Bay with his Tall Ship,  
And swiftly come to Desdemona's Arms,  
Give renewed fire to our extincted Spirits,  
And bring all Cyprus comfort:*

Enter Desdemona, &c.

——O behold,  
*The riches of the Ship is come on shoar.*  
*Ye men of Cyprus, let her have your Knees:*  
*Hail to the Lady: and the Grace of Heaven*  
*Before, behind thee, and on every hand.*  
*Enwheel the round——* <II, i, 73–87>

In the name of phrenzy, what means this Souldier? or would he talk thus, if he meant any thing at all? Who can say *Shakespear* is to blame in his *Character* of a Souldier? Has he not here done him reason? When cou'd our *Tramontains* talk at this rate? but our *Jarsey* and *Garnsey* Captains must not speak so fine things, nor compare with the Mediterranean, or Garrisons in *Rhodes* and *Cyprus*.

The next thing our Officer does, is to salute *Jago's* Wife, with this *Conge* to the Husband,

*Cas. Good Ancient, you are welcome, welcome Mistriss,*  
*Let it not Gall your Patience, good Jago,*  
*That I extend my Manners, 'tis my Breeding,*  
*That gives me this bold shew of Curtesy.*  
*Jago. Sir, would she give you so much of her lips,*  
*As of her tongue she has bestow'd on me,*  
*You'd have enough.*  
*Desd. Alass! she has no speech.* <II, i, 96–102>

Now follows a long rabble of Jack-pudden farce betwixt *Jago* and *Desdemona*, that runs on with all the little plays, jingle, and trash below the patience of any Countrey Kitchen-maid with her Sweet-heart. The Venetian *Donna* is hard put to't for pastime! And this is all, when they are newly got on shoar, from a dismal *Tempest*, and when every moment she might expect to hear her Lord (as she calls him) that she runs so mad after, is arriv'd or lost. And more-over.

——*In a Town of War,*  
 ——*The peoples Hearts brimful of fear.*  
 <II, iii, 205–6>

Never in the World had any Pagan Poet his Brains turn'd at this Monstrous rate. But the ground of all this *Bedlam-Buffoonry* we

saw, \*in the case of the French *Strolers*, the Company for Acting *Christs Passion*, or the *Old Testament*, were Carpenters, Coblers, and illiterate fellows; who found that the Drolls, and Fooleries interlarded by them, brought in the rabble, and lengthened their time, so they got Money by the bargain.

Our *Shakespear*, doubtless, was a great Master in this craft. These Carpenters and Coblers were the guides he followed. And it is then no wonder that we find so much farce and *Apochryphal Matter* in his Tragedies. Thereby un-hallowing the Theatre, profaning the name of Tragedy; And instead of representing Men and Manners, turning all Morality, good sence, and humanity into mockery and derision.

But pass we to something of a more serious air and Complexion. *Othello* and his Bride are the first Night, no sooner warm in Bed together, but a Drunken Quarrel happening in the Garison, two Souldiers Fight; And the General rises to part the Fray: He swears.

Othel. Now by Heaven,  
 My blood begins my safer guides to rule,  
 And passion, having my best judgment cool'd,  
 Assays to lead the way: if once I stir,  
 Or do but lift this arm, the best of you  
 Shall sink in my rebuke: give me to know  
 How this foul rout began; who set it on,  
 And he that is approv'd in this offence,  
 Tho' he had twin'd with me both at a birth,  
 Should lose me: what, in a Town of War,  
 Yet wild, the peoples Hearts brimful of fear,  
 To manage private, and domestick quarrels,  
 In Night, and on the Court, and guard of safety,  
 'Tis Monstrous, Jago, who began? <II, iii, 196-209>

In the days of yore, Souldiers did not swear in this fashion. What should a Souldier say farther, when he swears, unless he blaspheme? action shou'd speak the rest. What follows must be *ex ore gladii*; He is to rap out an Oath, not Wire-draw and Spin it out: by the style one might judge that *Shakespears* Souldiers were never bred in a

Camp, but rather had belong'd to some Affidavit-Office. Consider also throughout this whole Scene, how the Moorish General proceeds in examining into this *Rout*; No Justice *Clod-pate* could go on with more Phlegm and deliberation. The very first night that he lyes with the *Divine Desdemona* to be thus interrupted, might provoke a Mans Christian Patience to swear in another style. But a Negro General is a Man of strange Mettle. Only his Venetian Bride is a match for him. She understands that the Souldiers in the Garison are by th' ears together: And presently she at midnight, is in amongst them.

Desd. *What's the matter there?*

Othel. *All's well now Sweeting——*

*Come away to Bed——* <II, iii, 243–5>

In the beginning of this *second Act*, before they had lain together, *Desdemona* was said to be, *our Captains Captain*; Now they are no sooner in Bed together, but *Jago* is advising *Cassio* in these words.

*Jago.——Our Generals Wife is now the General, I may say so in this respect, for that he hath devoted, and given up himself to the contemplation, mark, and devotement of her parts and graces. Confess your self freely to her, importune her; she'll help to put you in your place again: she is so free, so kind, so apt, so blessed a disposition, that she holds it a vice in her goodness, not to do more than she is requested. This broken joint between you and her Husband, intreat her to splinter——*

<II, iii, 304–13>

And he says afterwards.

*Jago.——'Tis most easie*

*The inclining Desdemona to subdue,*

*In any honest suit. She's fram'd as fruitful,*

*As the free Elements: And then for her*

*To win the Moor, were't to renounce his Baptism,*

*All seals and symbols of redeemed sin,*

*His soul is so enfetters'd to her love,*

*That she may make, unmake, do what she list:*

*Even as her appetite shall play the God*

*With his weak function——*

<II, iii, 328–37>

This kind of discourse implies an experience and long conversation, the Honey-Moon over, and a Marriage of some standing. Would any man, in his wits, talk thus of a Bridegroom and Bride the first night of their coming together?

Yet this is necessary for our Poet; it would not otherwise serve his turn. This is the source, the foundation of his Plot; hence is the spring and occasion for all the Jealousie and bluster that ensues.

Nor are we in better circumstances for *Roderigo*. The last thing said by him in the former *Act* was,

Rod.——*I'll go sell all my Land.* <I, iii, 376>

A fair Estate is sold to *put money in his Purse*, for this adventure. And lo here, the next day.

Rod. *I do follow here in the Chace, not like a Hound that hunts, but one that fills up the cry: My Money is almost spent. I have been tonight exceedingly well cudgell'd, I think the issue will be, I shall have so much experience for my pains, and so no Money at all, and with a little more wit return to Venice.* <II, iii, 352–7>

The Venetian squire had a good riddance for his Acres. The Poet allows him just time to be once drunk, a very conscionable reckoning!

In this *Second Act*, the face of affairs could in truth be no other, than

——*In a Town of War,*

*Yet wild, the peoples Hearts brim-ful of fear.*

<II, iii, 205–6>

But nothing either in this *Act*, or in the rest that follow, shew any colour or complexion, any resemblance or proportion to that face and posture it ought to bear. Should a Painter draw any one *Scene* of this Play, and write over it, *This is a Town of War*; would any body believe that the Man were in his senses? would not a *Goose*, or *Dromedary* for it, be a name as just and suitable? And



what in Painting would be absurd, can never pass upon the World for Poetry.

*Cassio* having escaped the Storm comes on shoar at *Cyprus*, that night gets Drunk, Fights, is turn'd out from his Command, grows sober again, takes advice how to be restor'd, is all Repentance and Mortification: yet before he sleeps, is in the Morning at his Generals door with a noise of Fiddles, and a Droll to introduce him to a little Mouth-speech with the Bride.

*Cassio. Give me advantage of some brief discourse  
With Desdemona alone.*

*Em. Pray you come in,*

*I will bestow you, where you shall have time*

*To speak your bosom freely.*

<III, i, 52-5>

So, they are put together: And when he had gone on a good while *speaking his bosom*, *Desdemona* answers him.

*Des. Do not doubt that, before Emilia here,  
I give thee warrant of thy place; assure thee,  
If I do vow a friendship, I'll perform it,  
To the last article——*

<III, iii, 19-22>

Then after a ribble rabble of fulsome impertinence. She is at her Husband slap dash:

*Desd.——Good love, call him back.*

*Othel. Not now, sweet Desdemona, some other time.*

*Desd. But shall't shortly?*

*Othel. The sooner, sweet, for you.*

*Desd. Shall't be to-night at Supper?*

*Othel. No, not tonight.*

*Desd. To-morrow Dinner then?*

*Othel. I shall not dine at home,*

*I meet the Captains at the Citadel.*

*Desd. Why then to morrow night, or Tuesday morn,*

*Or night, or Wednesday morn?*

<III, iii, 55-62>

After forty lines more, at this rate, they part, and then comes the wonderful Scene, where *Jago* by shrugs, half words, and ambiguous reflections, works *Othello* up to be Jealous. One might think, after

what we have seen, that there needs no great cunning, no great poetry and address to make the *Moor* Jealous. Such impatience, such a rout for a handsome young fellow, the very morning after her Marriage must make him either to be jealous, or to take her for a *Changeling*, below his Jealousie. After this *Scene*, it might strain the Poets skill to reconcile the couple, and allay the Jealousie. *Jago* now can only *actum agere*, and vex the audience with a nauseous repetition.

Whence comes it then, that this is the top scene, the Scene that raises *Othello* above all other Tragedies on our Theatres? It is purely from the *Action*; from the Mops and the Mows, the Grimace, the Grins and Gesticulation. Such scenes as this have made all the World run after *Harlequin* and *Scaramuccio*.

The several degrees of *Action* were amongst the Ancients distinguish'd by the *Cothurnus*, the *Soccus*, and by the *Planipes*.

Had this scene been represented at old *Rome*, *Othello* and *Jago* must have quitted their Buskins; They must have played *bare-foot*: the spectators would not have been content without seeing their Podometry; And the Jealousie work at the very Toes of 'em. Words, be they Spanish, or Polish, or any inarticulate sound, have the same effect, they can only serve to distinguish, and, as it were, beat time to the *Action*. But here we see a known Language does wofully encumber, and clog the operation: as either forc'd, or heavy, or trifling, or incoherent, or improper, or most what improbable. When no words interpose to spoil the concept, every one interprets as he likes best. So in that memorable dispute betwixt *Panurge* and our English Philosopher in *Rabelais*, perform'd without a word speaking; The Theologians, Physicians, and Surgeons, made one inference; the Lawyers, Civilians, and Canonists, drew another conclusion more to their mind.

*Othello* the night of his arrival at *Cyprus*, is to consummate with *Desdemona*, they go to Bed. Both are rais'd and run into the Town amidst the Souldiers that were a fighting: then go to Bed again, that morning he sees *Cassio* with her; She importunes him to restore *Cassio*. *Othello* shews nothing of the Souldiers Mettle: but like a tedious, drawling, tame Goose, is gaping after any paultrey insinuation, labouring to be jealous; And catching at every blown surmize.

Jago. *My Lord, I see you are moved.*

Oth. *No, not much moved.*

*Do not think but Desdemona is honest.*

Jag. *Long live she so, and long live you to think so.*

Oth. *And yet how Nature erring from it self,*

Jago. *I, There's the point: as to be bold with you,*

*Not to affect many proposed Matches*

*Of her own clime, complexion, and degree,*

*Wherein we see, in all things, Nature tends,*

*Fye, we may smell in such a will most rank,*

*Foul disproportion, thoughts unnatural——*

<III, iii, 228–37>

The Poet here is certainly in the right, and by consequence the foundation of the Play must be concluded to be Monstrous; And the constitution, all over, to be *most rank*,

*Foul disproportion, thoughts unnatural.*

Which instead of moving pity, or any passion Tragical and Reasonable, can produce nothing but horror and aversion, and what is odious and grievous to an Audience. After this fair Mornings work, the Bride enters, drops a Curse.

Desd. *How now, my dear Othello,*

*Your Dinner, and the generous Islanders*

*By you invited, do attend your presence.*

Oth. *I am to blame.*

Desd. *Why is your speech so faint? Are you not well.*

Oth. *I have a pain upon my Fore-head, dear.*

<III, iii, 283–8>

Michael Cassio came not from Venice in the Ship with Desdemona, nor till this Morning could be suspected of an opportunity with her. And 'tis now but Dinner time; yet the Moor complains of his Fore-head. He might have set a Guard on Cassio, or have lockt up Desdemona, or have observ'd their carriage a day or two longer. He is on other occasions phlegmatick enough: this is very hasty. But after Dinner we have a wonderful flight:

*Othel. What sense had I of her stoln hours of lust?  
 I saw't not, thought it not, it harm'd not me:  
 I slept the next night well, was free and merry,  
 I found not Cassio's kisses on her lips——*

<III, iii, 342–5>

A little after this, says he,

*Oth. Give me a living reason that she's disloyal.  
 Jago.——I lay with Cassio lately,  
 And being troubled with a raging Tooth, I could not sleep;  
 There are a kind of men so loose of Soul,  
 That in their sleeps will mutter their affairs,  
 One of this kind is Cassio:  
 In sleep I heard him say: sweet Desdemona,  
 Let us be wary, let us hide our loves:  
 And then, Sir, wou'd he gripe, and wring my hand,  
 Cry out, sweet Creature; and then kiss me hard,  
 As if he pluckt up kisses by the roots,  
 That grew upon my Lips, then laid his Leg  
 Over my Thigh, and sigh'd, and kiss'd, and then  
 Cry'd, cursed fate, that gave thee to the Moor. <III, iii, 413–30>*

By the Rapture of *Othello*, one might think that he raves, is not of sound Memory, forgets that he has not yet been two nights in the Matrimonial Bed with his *Desdemona*. But we find *Jago*, who should have a better memory, forging his lies after the very same Model. The very night of their Marriage at *Venice*, the Moor, and also *Cassio*, were sent away to *Cyprus*. In the *Second Act*, *Othello* and his Bride go the first time to Bed; The *Third Act* opens the next morning. The parties have been in view to this moment. We saw the opportunity which was given for *Cassio* to *speake his bosom* to her; *once*, indeed, might go a great way with a Venetian. But *once*, will not do the Poets business; The *Audience* must suppose a great many bouts, to make the plot operate. They must deny their senses, to reconcile it to common sense: or make it any way consistent, and hang together.

Nor, for the most part, are the single thoughts more consistent,

than is the œconomy: The Indians do as they ought in painting the Devil White: but says *Othello*:

*Oth.*——*Her name that was as fresh  
As Dian's Visage, is now begrim'd and black,  
As mine own face——* <III, iii, 390–2>

There is not a Monky but understands Nature better; not a Pug in *Barbary* that has not a truer taste of things.

*Othel.*           ——*O now for ever  
Farewel the tranquil mind, farewel content;  
Farewel the plumed troop, and the big Wars,  
That make Ambition Vertue: O farewel,  
Farewel the neighing Steed, and the shrill Trump,  
The spirit stirring Drum, th' ear-piercing Fief,  
The royal Banner, and all quality,  
Pride, Pomp, and Circumstance of glorious War,  
And O ye Mortal Engines, whose wide throats  
Th' immortal Joves great clamours counterfeit,  
Farewel, Othello's occupation's gone.* <III, iii, 351–61>

These lines are recited here, not for any thing Poetical in them, besides the sound, that pleases. Yet this sort of imagery and amplification is extreamly taking, where it is just and natural. As in *Gorboduck*, when a young Princess on whose fancy the personal gallantry of the Kings Son then slain, had made a strong impression, thus, out of the abundance of her imagination, pours forth her grief:

*Marcella.*——*Ah noble Prince! how oft have I beheld  
Thee mounted on thy fierce, and trampling Steed,  
Shining in Armour bright before the Tilt,  
Wearing thy Mistress sleeve ty'd on thy helm.  
Then charge thy staff, to please thy Ladies Eye,  
That bow'd the head piece of thy friendly Foe?  
How oft in arms, on Horse to bend the Mace,  
How oft in arms, on foot, to break the Spear;  
Which never now these Eyes may see agen?*

Notwithstanding that this Scene had proceeded with fury and bluster sufficient to make the whole Isle ring of his Jealousy, yet is *Desdemona* diverting her self with a paultry buffoon and only solicitous in quest of *Cassio*.

*Desd. Seek him, bid him come hither, tell him——  
Where shou'd I lose that Handkerchief, Emilia?  
Believe me I had rather lose my Purse,  
Full of Crusado's: And but my noble Moor  
Is true of mind, and made of no such baseness,  
As Jealous Creatures are; it were enough  
To put him to ill thinking.*

*Em. Is he not Jealous?*

*Desd. Who he? I think the Sun, where he was born,  
Drew all such humours from him.* <III, iv, 16–28>

By this manner of speech one wou'd gather the couple had been yoak'd together a competent while, what might she say more, had they cohabited, and had been Man and Wife seven years?

She spies the Moor.

*Desd. I will not leave him now,  
Till Cassio is recall'd.  
I have sent to bid Cassio come speak with you.  
Othel.——Lend me thy Handkerchief.  
Desd.——This is a trick to put me from my suit.  
I pray let Cassio be receiv'd agen.  
Em.——Is not this man Jealous?*

*——'Tis not a year or two shews us a man——*  
<III, iv, 29–30, 47, 49, 88–9, 100, 104>

As if for the first year or two, *Othello* had not been jealous? The *third Act* begins in the morning, at noon she drops the Handkerchief, after dinner she misses it, and then follows all this outrage and horrible clutter about it. If we believe a small Damosel in the last *Scene* of this *Act*, this day is effectually seven days.

*Bianca.——What keep a week away! seven days, seven nights,  
Eightscore eight hours, and lovers absent hours,  
More tedious than the Dial eightscore times.  
O weary reckoning!* <III, iv, 174–7>



Our Poet is at this plunge, that whether this *Act* contains the compass of one day, of seven days, or of seven years, or of all together, the repugnance and absurdity would be the same. For *Othello*, all the while, has nothing to say or to do, but what loudly proclaim him jealous: her friend and confident *Emilia* again and again rounds her in the Ear that *the Man* is Jealous: yet this Venetian dame is neither to see, nor to hear; nor to have any sense or understanding, nor to strike any other note but *Cassio, Cassio*.

The Scotchman hearing *trut Scot, trut Scot*, when he saw it came from a Bird, checkt his Choler, and put up his *Swerd* again, with a *Braad O God, G. if thaa'dst ben a Maan, as th' art ane Green Geuse, I sud ha stuck tha' to thin heart. Desdemona* and that Parrot might pass for Birds of a Feather; and if *Sauney* had not been more generous than *Othello*, but continued to insult the poor Creature after this beastly example, he would have given our Poet as good stuff to work upon: And his *Tragedy of the Green Geuse*, might have deserv'd a better audience, than this of *Desdemona*, or *The Moor of Venice*.

## ACT IV.

*Enter Jago and Othello.*

Jago. *Will you think so?*

Othel. *Think so, Jago.*

Jago. *What, to kiss in private?*

Othel. *An unauthorised kiss.*

Jago. *Or to be naked with her friend a-bed,  
An hour or more, not meaning any harm?*

Othel. *Naked a-bed, Jago, and not mean harm?——*

<IV, i, 1–5>

At this gross rate of trifling, our General and his Auncient March on most heroically; till the Jealous Booby has his Brains turn'd; and falls in a Trance. Would any imagine this to be the Language of Venetians, of Souldiers, and mighty Captains? no *Bartholomew Droll* cou'd subsist upon such trash. But lo, a Stratagem never presented in Tragedy.

Jago. *Stand you a while a part——*

——*Incave your self;*

*And mark the Jeers, the Gibes, and notable scorns,  
That dwell in every region of his face,  
For I will make him tell the tale a new,  
Where, how, how oft, how long ago, and when  
He has, and is again to Cope your Wife:  
I say, but mark his gesture——* <IV, i, 74, 81-7>

With this device *Othello* withdraws. Says *Jago* aside.

*Jago. Now will I question Cassio of Bianca,  
A Huswife——  
That doats on Cassio——  
He when he hears of her cannot refrain  
From the excess of Laughter——  
As he shall smile, Othello shall go mad,  
And his unbookish jealousy must conster  
Poor Cassio's smiles, gesture, and light behaviour  
Quite in the wrong——* <IV, i, 93-103>

So to work they go: And *Othello* is as wise a commentator, and makes his applications pat, as heart cou'd wish——but I wou'd not expect to find this Scene acted nearer than in *Southwark* Fair. But the *Hankerchief* is brought in at last, to stop all holes, and close the evidence. So now being satisfied with the proof, they come to a resolution, that the offenders shall be murdered.

*Othel.——But yet the pity of it, Jago, ah the pity.*

*Jago. If you be so fond over her iniquity give her Patent to offend.  
For if it touches not you, it comes near no Bobby.*

*Do it not with poison, strangle her in her Bed; Even the Bed she has contaminated.*

*Oth. Good, good, the Justice of it pleases, very good.*

*Jago. And for Cassio, let me be his undertaker——*

<IV, i, 191-206>

*Jago* had some pretence to be discontent with *Othello* and *Cassio*: And what passed hitherto, was the operation of revenge. *Demona* had never done him harm, always kind to him, and to his Wife; was his Country-woman, a Dame of quality: for him to abet her Murder, shews nothing of a Souldier, nothing of a Man, nothing of Nature in it. The *Ordinary* of *New gate* never had the like Mon-

ster to pass under his examination. Can it be any diversion to see a Rogue beyond what the Devil ever finish'd? Or wou'd it be any instruction to an Audience? *Jago* cou'd desire no better than to set *Cassio* and *Othello*, his two Enemies, by the Ears together; so he might have been reveng'd on them both at once: And chusing for his own share, the Murder of *Desdemona*, he had the opportunity to play booty, and save the poor harmless wretch. But the Poet must do every thing by contraries: to surprize the Audience still with something horrible and prodigious, beyond any human imagination. At this rate he must out-do the Devil, to be a Poet in the rank with *Shakespear*.

Soon after this, arrives from *Venice*, *Ludovico*, a noble Cousin of *Desdemona*, presently she is at him also, on the behalf of *Cassio*.

*Desd.* *Cousin there's fallen between him and my Lord  
An unkind breach, but you shall make all well.*

*Lud.* *Is there division 'twixt my Lord and Cassio.*

*Desd.* *A most unhappy one, I wou'd do much  
To attone them, for the love I bear to Cassio.*

<IV, i, 219–20, 225–7>

By this time, we are to believe the couple have been a week or two Married: And *Othello's* Jealousie that had rag'd so loudly, and had been so uneasie to himself, must have reach'd her knowledge. The *Audience* have all heard him more plain with her, than was needful to a Venetian capacity: And yet she must still be impertinent in her suit for *Cassio*, well, this *Magnifico* comes from the *Doge*, and Senators, to displace *Othello*.

*Lud.*——*Deputing Cassio in his Government.*

*Desd.* *Trust me, I am glad on't.*

*Oth.* *Indeed.*

*Desd.* *My Lord.*

*Oth.* *I am glad to see you mad.*

*Desd.* *How, sweet Othello.*

*Oth.* *Devil.*

*Desd.* *I have not deserved this.*

*Oth.* *O Devil, Devil——*

*Out of my sight.*

Desd. *I will not stay to offend you.*

Lud. *Truly, an obedient Lady.*

*I do beseech your Lordship call her back.*

Oth. *Mistress.*

Desd. *My Lord.*

Oth. *What would you with her Sir?*

Lud. *Who, I, my Lord?*

Oth. *I, you did wish that I wou'd make her turn.*

*Sir, she can turn, and turn, and yet go on,*

*And turn agen, and she can weep, Sir, weep.*

*And she is obedient, as you say, obedient:*

*Very obedient——*

Lud. *What strike your Wife?*

<IV, i, 233–7, 240, 243–53, 269>

Of what flesh and blood does our Poet make these noble Venetians? the men without Gall; the Women without either Brains or Sense? A Senators Daughter runs away with this Black-amoor; the Government employs this Moor to defend them against the Turks, so resent not the Moors Marriage at present, but the danger over, her Father gets the Moor Cashier'd, sends his Kinsman, Seignior *Ludovico*, to *Cyprus* with the Commission for a new General; who, at his arrival, finds the Moor calling the Lady his Kinswoman, Whore and Stumpet, and kicking her: what says the *Magnifico*?

Lud. *My Lord this would not be believ'd in Venice,*

*Tho' I shou'd swear I saw't, 'tis very much;*

*Make her amends: she weeps.*

<IV, i, 238–40>

The Moor has no body to take his part, no body of his Colour: *Ludovico* has the new Governour *Cassio*, and all his Countrymen Venetians about him. What Poet wou'd give a villanous Black-amoor this Ascendant? What Tramontain could fancy the Venetians so low, so despicable, or so patient? this outrage to an injur'd Lady, the *Divine Desdemona*, might in a colder Climate have provoked some body to be her Champion: but the Italians may well conclude we have a strange Genius for Poetry. In the next Scene *Othello* is examining the supposed Bawd; then follows another storm of horror and outrage against the poor Chicken, his Wife.

Some Drayman or drunken Tinker might possibly treat his drab at this sort of rate, and mean no harm by it: but for his excellency, a My lord General, to Serenade a Senator's Daughter with such a volly of scoundrel filthy Language, is sure the most absurd Maggot that ever bred from any Poets addle Brain.

And she is in the right, who tells us,

Emil.—*A Begger in his Drink,  
Cou'd not have laid such terms upon his Callet.*

<IV, ii, 121–2>

This is not to describe passion. *Seneca* had another notion in the Case:

*Parvæ loquuntur curæ, ingentes stupent.*

And so had the Painter, who drew *Agamemnon* with his Face covered. Yet to make all worse, her Murder, and the manner of it, had before been resolv'd upon and concerted. But nothing is to provoke a Venetian; she takes all in good part; had the Scene lain in *Russia*, what cou'd we have expected more? With us a Tinkers Trull wou'd be Nettled, wou'd repartee with more spirit, and not appear so void of spleen.

Desd. *O good Jago,  
What shall I do to win my Lord agen?*

<IV, ii, 149–50>

No Woman bred out of a Pig-stye, cou'd talk so meanly. After this, she is call'd to Supper with *Othello*, *Ludovico*, &c. after that comes a filthy sort of Pastoral Scene, where the *Wedding Sheets*, and Song of *Willow*, and her Mothers Maid, poor *Barbara*, are not the least moving things in this entertainment. But that we may not be kept too long in the dumps, nor the melancholy Scenes lye too heavy, undigested on our Stomach, this *Act* gives us for a farewell, the *salsa*, *O picante*, some quibbles, and smart touches, as *Ovid* had Prophecied:

*Est & in obscænos deflexa Tragædia risus.*

The last *Act* begins with *Jago* and *Roderigo*; Who a little before had been upon the huff:

Rod. *I say it is not very well: I will make my self known to Desdemona; if she will return me my Jewels, I will give over my suit, and repent my unlawful sollicitation, if not, assure your self, I'll seek satisfaction of you.* <IV, ii, 197–200>

*Roderigo*, a Noble Venetian had sought *Desdemona* in Marriage, is troubled to find the Moor had got her from him, advises with *Jago*, who wheedles him to sell his Estate, and go over the Sea to *Cyprus*, in expectation to Cuckold *Othello*, there having cheated *Roderigo* of all his Money and Jewels, on pretence of presenting them to *Desdemona*, our Gallant grows angry, and would have satisfaction from *Jago*; who sets all right, by telling him *Cassio* is to be Governour, *Othello* is going with *Desdemona* into *Mauritania*: to prevent this, you are to murder *Cassio*, and then all may be well.

*Jago. He goes into Mauritania, and takes with him the fair Desdemona, unless his abode be lingred here by some accident, wherein none can be so determinate, as the removing of Cassio.* <IV, ii, 223–6>

Had *Roderigo* been one of the *Banditi*, he might not much stick at the Murder. But why *Roderigo* should take this for payment, and risque his person where the prospect of advantage is so very uncertain and remote, no body can imagine. It had need be a *super-subtle* Venetian that this Plot will pass upon. Then after a little spurt of villany and Murder, we are brought to the most lamentable, that ever appear'd on any Stage. A noble Venetian Lady is to be murdered by our Poet; in sober sadness, purely for being a Fool. No Pagan Poet but wou'd have found some *Machine* for her deliverance. *Pegasus* wou'd have strain'd hard to have brought old *Perseus* on his back, time enough, to rescue this *Andromeda* from so foul a Monster. Has our Christian Poetry no generosity, nor bowels? Ha, Sir *Lancelot*! ha St. *George*! will no Ghost leave the shades for us in extremity, to save a distressed Damosel?

But for our comfort, however felonious is the Heart, hear with what soft language, he does approach her, with a Candle in his Hand:



Oth. *Put out the light and then put out the light;  
If I quench thee, thou flaming Minister,  
I can again thy former light restore——* <V, ii, 7-9>

Who would call him a Barbarian, Monster, Savage? Is this a Black-amoor?

*Soles occidere & redire possunt——*

The very Soul and Quintessence of Sir *George Etheridge*.

One might think the General should not glory much in this action, but make an hasty work on't, and have turn'd his Eyes away from so unsouldierly an Execution: yet is he all pause and deliberation; handles her as calmly: and is as careful of her Souls health, as it had been her *Father Confessor*. *Have you prayed to Night, Desdemona?* But the suspence is necessary, that he might have a convenient while so to *roul his Eyes*, and so to *gnaw his nether lip* to the spectators. Besides the greater cruelty—*sub tam lentis maxillis*.

But hark, a most tragical thing laid to her charge.

Oth. *That Handkerchief, that I so lov'd, and gave thee,  
Thou gav'st to Cassio.*

Desd. *No by my Life and Soul;  
Send for the man and ask him.*

Oth.——*By Heaven, I saw my Hankerchief in his hand——  
——I saw the Handkerchief.* <V, ii, 51-3, 65, 69>

So much ado, so much stress, so much passion and repetition about an Handkerchief! Why was not this call'd the *Tragedy of the Handkerchief*? What can be more absurd than (as *Quintilian* expresses it) *in parvis litibus has Tragædias movere*? We have heard of *Fortunatus his Purse*, and of the *Invisible Cloak*, long ago worn thread bare, and stow'd up in the Wardrobe of obsolete Romances: one might think, that were a fitter place for this Handkerchief, than that it, at this time of day, be worn on the Stage, to raise every where all this clutter and turmoil. Had it been *Desdemona's Garter*, the Sagacious Moor might have smelt a Rat: but the Handkerchief is so remote a trifle, no Booby, on this side *Mauritania*, cou'd make any consequence from it.

We may learn here, that a Woman never loses her Tongue, even tho' after she is stiff'd.

Desd. *O falsly, falsly murder'd.*

Em. *Sweet Desdemona, O sweet Mistress, speak.*

Desd. *A guiltless death I dye.*

Em. *O who has done the deed?*

Desd. *No body, I my self, farewell.*

*Commend me to my kind Lord, O farewell.*

<V, ii, 120, 124-8>

This *Desdemona* is a black swan; or an old Black-amoor is a bewitching Bed-fellow. If this be Nature, it is a *lascheté* below what the English Language can express.

For *Lardella*, to make love, like an *Humble Bee*, was, in the Rehearsal, thought a fancy odd enough.

But hark what follows:

Oth. ——— *O heavy hour!*

*Methinks it shou'd be now a huge Eclipse*

*Of Sun and Moon, and that the affrighted globe*

*Shou'd yawn at Alteration.*

<V, ii, 101-4>

This is wonderful. Here is Poetry to *elevate* and *amuse*. Here is sound All-sufficient. It wou'd be uncivil to ask *Flamstead*, if the Sun and Moon can both together be so hugely eclipsed, in any *heavy hour* whatsoever. Nor must the Spectators consult *Gresham Colledge*, whether a body is naturally *frighted* till he *Yawn* agen. The Fortune of *Greece* is not concern'd with these Matters. These are Physical circumstances a Poet may be ignorant in, without any harm to the publick. These slips have no influence on our Manners and good Life; which are the Poets Province.

Rather may we ask here what unnatural crime *Desdemona*, or her Parents had committed, to bring this Judgment down upon her; to Wed a Black-amoor, and innocent to be thus cruelly murder'd by him. What instruction can we make out of this Catastrophe? Or whither must our reflection lead us? Is not this to envenome and sour our spirits, to make us repine and grumble at Providence; and the government of the World? If this be our end, what boots it to be Vertuous?

*Desdemona* dropt the Handkerchief, and missed it that very day after her Marriage; it might have been rumpl'd up with her Wedding sheets: And this Night that she lay in her wedding sheets, the *Fairey Napkin* (whilst *Othello* was stifling her) might have started up to disarm his fury, and stop his ungracious mouth. Then might she (in a Traunce for fear) have lain as dead. Then might he, believing her dead, touch'd with remorse, have honestly cut his own Throat, by the good leave, and with the applause of all the Spectators. Who might thereupon have gone home with a quiet mind, admiring the beauty of Providence; fairly and truly represented on the Theatre.

Oth.—*Why, how shou'd she be murdered?*

Em. *Alas, who knows?*

Oth. *You heard her say her self it was not I.*

Em. *She did so, I must needs report a truth.*

Oth. *She's like a liar gone to burn in Hell.*

*'Twas I that did it.*

Em. *O, the more Angel she!*

*And you the blacker Devil.*

Oth. *She turn'd to folly, and she was an Whore.*

Em. *Thou dost belye her, and thou art a Devil.*

Oth. *She was false as Water.*

Em. *Thou art rash as Fire,*

*To say that she was false: O she was heavenly true.*

<V, ii, 129–38>

In this kind of Dialogue they continue for forty lines farther, before she bethinks her self, to cry Murder.

Em. ———*Help, help, O help,*

*The Moor has kill'd my Mistress, murder, Murder.*

<V, ii, 169–70>

But from this Scene to the end of the Play we meet with nothing but blood and butchery, described much-what to the style of *the last Speeches and Confessions of the persons executed at Tyburn*: with this difference, that there we have the *fact*, and the due course of Justice, whereas our Poet against all Justice and Reason, against all Law, Humanity and Nature, in a barbarous arbitrary way, executes and makes havock of his subjects, *Hab-nab*, as they come to

hand. *Desdemona* dropt her Handkerchief; therefore she must be stiff'd. *Othello*, by law to be broken on the Wheel, by the Poets cunning escapes with cutting his own Throat. *Cassio*, for I know not what, comes off with a broken shin. *Jago* murders his Benefactor *Roderigo*, as this were poetical gratitude. *Jago* is not yet kill'd, because there never yet was such a villain alive. The Devil, if once he brings a man to be dipt in a deadly sin, lets him alone, to take his course: and now when the *Foul Fiend* has done with him, our wise Authors take the sinner into their poetical service; there to accomplish him, and do the Devils drudgery.

*Philosophy* tells us it is a principle in the Nature of Man *to be grateful*.

*History* may tell us that *John an Oaks*, *John a Stiles*, or *Jago* were ungrateful; *Poetry* is to follow Nature; *Philosophy* must be his guide: history and *fact* in particular cases of *John an Oaks*, or *John of Styles*, are no warrant or direction for a Poet. Therefore *Aristotle* is always telling us that Poetry is σπουδαιώτερον καὶ φιλοσοφώτερον, is more general and abstracted, is led more by the Philosophy, the reason and nature of things, than History: which only records things higlety, piglety, right or wrong as they happen. History might without any preamble or difficulty, say that *Jago* was ungrateful. Philosophy then calls him unnatural; But the Poet is not, without huge labour and preparation to expose the Monster; and after shew the Divine Vengeance executed upon him. The Poet is not to add wilful Murder to his ingratitude: he has not antidote enough for the Poison: his Hell and Furies are not punishment sufficient for one single crime, of that bulk and aggravation.

Em. *O thou dull Moor, that Handkerchief thou speakest on,  
I found by Fortune, and did give my Husband:*

*For often with a solemn earnestness,*

*(More than indeed belong'd to such a trifle)*

*He beg'd of me to steal it.*

<V, ii, 228–32>

Here we see the meanest woman in the Play takes this *Handkerchief* for a *trifle* below her Husband to trouble his head about it. Yet we find, it entered into our Poets head, to make a Tragedy of this *Trifle*.

Then for the *unraveling of the Plot*, as they call it, never was

old deputy Recorder in a Country Town, with his spectacles in summoning up the evidence, at such a puzzle: so blunder'd, and be-doultefied: as is our Poet, to have a good riddance: And get the *Catastrophe* off his hands.

What can remain with the Audience to carry home with them from this sort of Poetry, for their use and edification? how can it work, unless (instead of settling the mind, and purging our passions) to delude our senses, disorder our thoughts, addle our brain, pervert our affections, hair our imaginations, corrupt our appetite, and fill our head with vanity, confusion, *Tintamarre*, and Jingle-jangle, beyond what all the Parish Clarks of *London*, with their *old Testament* farces, and interludes, in *Richard* the seconds time cou'd ever pretend to? Our only hopes, for the good of their Souls, can be, that these people go to the Playhouse, as they do to Church, to sit still, look on one another, make no reflection, nor mind the Play, more than they would a Sermon.

There is in this Play, some burlesk, some humour, and ramble of Comical Wit, some shew, and some *Mimickry* to divert the spectators: but the tragical part is, plainly none other, than a Bloody Farce, without salt or savour.

## CHAP. VIII

*Reflections on the Julius Cæsar. Men famous in History. To be rob'd of their good name, Sacrilege. Shakespear, abuse of History. Contradiction, in the character of Brutus. Villon and Dante, that Hugh Capet from a Butcher. Preparation in Poetry. Strong reasons in Cassius. Roman Senators impertinent as the Venetian. Portia as Desdemona. The same parts and good breeding. How talk of Business. Whispers. Brutus's Tinder-box, Sleepy Boy, Fiddle. Brutus and Cassius, Flat-foot Mimicks. The Indignity. Laberius. Play of the Incarnation. The Madonna's—Shouting and Battel. Strollers in Cornwal. Rehearsal, law for acting it once a week.*

*The Catiline by Ben. Johnson. Why an Orator to be vir bonus. Ben cou'd distinguish Men and Manners. Sylla's Ghost. The speech not to be made in a blind Corner. Corneille. Common sence*

*teaches Unity of Action. The Chorus, of necessity, keep the Poet to time, and place. No rule observ'd. A Life in Plutarch. Acts of the Apostles. Ben is fidus interpres. Is the Horse in Mill in flat opposition to Horace. Trifling tale, or corruption of History, unfit for Tragedy. In contempt of Poetry. Aristophanes, not the occasion of the Death of Socrates. Was for a reformation in the service book. With what address he effected it.*

*Sarpedon's Fast, of divine institution. The least sally from, or Parenthesis in the ancient Comedy of more moment than all our Tragedies. English Comedy the best.*

In the former Play, our Poet might be the bolder, the persons being all his own Creatures, and meer fiction. But here he sins not against Nature and Philosophy only, but against the most known History, and the memory of the Noblest Romans, that ought to be sacred to all Posterity. He might be familiar with *Othello* and *Jago*, as his own natural acquaintance: but *Cæsar* and *Brutus* were above his conversation: To put them in Fools Coats, and make them Jack-puddens in the *Shakespear* dress, is a *Sacrilege*, beyond any thing in *Spelman*. The Truth is, this authors head was full of villainous, unnatural images, and history has only furnish'd him with great names, thereby to recommend them to the World; by writing over them, *This is Brutus; this is Cicero; this is Cæsar*. But generally his History flies in his Face; And comes in flat contradiction to the Poets imagination. As for example: of *Brutus* says *Antony*, his Enemy.

Ant. ——— *His life was gentle, and the Elements  
So mixt in him, that Nature might stand up,  
And say to all the World, this was a Man.* <V, v, 73–5>

And when every body jug'd it necessary to kill *Antony*, our Author in his *Laconical* way, makes *Brutus* speak thus:

Bru. *Our Course will seem too bloody, Caius Cassius,  
To cut the Head off, and then hack the Limbs,  
Like wrath in death, and envy afterwards;  
For Antony is but a Limb of Cæsar:  
Let's be Sacrificers, but not Butchers, Caius,  
We all stand up against the Spirit of Cæsar,*



*And in the Spirit of man there is no blood;  
 O that we then cou'd come by Cæsars Spirit,  
 And not dismember Cæsar; but, alas!  
 Cæsar must bleed for it. And gentle friends,  
 Let's kill him boldly, but not wrathfully;  
 Let's carve him, as a dish fit for the Gods,  
 Not hew him, as a Carkass fit for Hounds.  
 And let our Hearts, as subtle Masters do,  
 Stir up their Servants to an act of rage,  
 And after seem to chide 'em. This shall make  
 Our purpose necessary, and not envious:  
 Which so appearing to the common eyes,  
 We shall be call'd Purgers, not murderers.  
 And for Mark Antony think not of him:  
 For he can do no more than Cæsars arm,  
 When Cæsars head is off.*

&lt;II, i, 162-83&gt;

In these two speeches we have the true character of *Brutus*, according to History. But when *Shakespear's* own blundering Maggot of self contradiction works, then must *Brutus* cry out.

*Bru. —Stoop, Romans, stoop,  
 And let us bath our hands in Cæsars blood  
 Up to the Elbows——*

&lt;III, i, 106-8&gt;

Had this been spoken by some King of *France*, we might remember *Villon*:

*Se fusse des hoirs Hue Capel,  
 Qui fut extrait de boucherie,  
 On m'eut parmy ce drapel,  
 Fait boire de l'escorcherie.*

And what *Dante* has recorded.

*Chiamato fui di lá Ugo ciapetta,  
 Di me son Nati i Philippi, e' Loigi,  
 Per cui novellamente e' Francia retta,  
 Figlivol fui d'un Beccaio di Parigi——*

For, indeed, that Language which *Shakespear* puts in the Mouth of *Brutus* wou'd not suit, or be convenient, unless from some son of

the Shambles, or some natural offspring of the Butchery. But never any Poet so boldly and so barefac'd, flounced along from contradiction to contradiction. A little preparation and forecast might do well now and then. For his *Desdemona's* Marriage, He might have helped out the probability by feigning how that some way, or other, a Black-amoor Woman had been her Nurse, and suckl'd her: Or that once, upon a time, some *Virtuoso* had transfus'd into her Veins the Blood of a black Sheep: after which she might never be at quiet till she is, as the Poet will have it, *Tupt with an old black ram*.

But to match this pithy discourse of *Brutus*; see the weighty argumentative oration, whereby *Cassius* draws him into the Conspiracy.

Cas. — Brutus, and Cæsar: *what shou'd be in that Cæsar?*  
*Why shou'd that name be sounded more than yours?*  
*Write them together: yours is as fair a name:*  
*Sound them, it doth become the mouth as well.*  
*Weigh them, it is as heavy: conjure with them,*  
*Brutus will start a Spirit as soon as Cæsar.*  
*Now, in the names of all the Gods at once,*  
*Upon what meat doth this our Cæsar feed,*  
*That he is grown so great? Age, thou art sham'd;*  
*Rome thou hast lost the breed of noble bloods.*  
*When went there by an Age since the great flood,*  
*But it was fam'd with more, than with one man?*  
*When could they say (till now) that talk'd of Rome,*  
*That her wide Walls encompass'd but one man?*  
*Now it is Rome indeed, and room enough*  
*When there is in it but one only Man——* <I, ii, 142–57>

One may Note that all our Authors Senators, and his Orators had their learning and education at the same school, be they Venetians, Black-amoores, Ottamites, or noble Romans. *Brutus* and *Cassius* here, may *cap sentences*, with *Brabantio*, and the *Doge* of *Venice*, or any *Magnifico* of them all. We saw how the Venetian Senate spent their time, when, amidst their alarms, call'd to Counsel at midnight. Here the Roman Senators, the midnight before *Cæsar's* death (met in the Garden of *Brutus*, to settle the matter of their

Conspiracy) are gazing up to the Stars, and have no more in their heads than to wrangle about which is the East and West.

Decius. *Here lies the East, doth not the day break here?*

Caska. *No.*

Cinna. *O, pardon, Sir, it doth, and yon grey lines,  
That fret the Clouds, are Messengers of Day.*

Caska. *You shall confess, that you are both deceiv'd:*

*Here as I point my Sword, the Sun arises,*

*Which is a great way growing on the South,*

*Weighing the youthful season of the year,*

*Some two months hence, up higher toward the North,*

*He first presents his fire, and the high East*

*Stands as the Capitol directly here.*

<II, i, 101-11>

This is directly, as *Bays* tells us, *to shew the World a Pattern here, how men shou'd talk of Business*. But it wou'd be a wrong to the Poet, not to inform the reader, that on the Stage, the Spectators see *Brutus* and *Cassius* all this while at *Whisper* together. That is the importance, that deserves all the attention. But the *grand question* wou'd be: does the *Audience* hear 'em *Whisper*?

Ush. *Why, truly I can't tell: there's much to be said upon the word Whisper——*

Another Poet wou'd have allow'd the noble *Brutus* a Watch-Candle in his Chamber this important night, rather than have puzzel'd his man *Lucius* to grope in the dark for a Flint and Tinder-box, to get the Taper lighted. It wou'd have been no great charge to the Poet, however. Afterwards, another night, the Fiddle is in danger to be broken by this sleepy Boy.

Bru. *If thou dost nod thou break'st thy Instrument.*

<IV, iii, 269>

But pass we to the famous Scene, where *Brutus* and *Cassius* are by the Poet represented acting the parts of *Mimicks*: from the Nobility and Buskins, they are made the *Planipedes*; are brought to daunce *barefoot*, for a Spectacle to the people, Two Philosophers, two generals, (*imperatores* was their title) the *ultimi Romanorum*, are to play the Bullies and Buffoon, to shew their Legerdemain,

their *activity* of face, and divarication of Muscles. They are to play a prize, a tryal of skill in huffing and swaggering, like two drunken Hectors, for a two-penny reckoning.

When the Roman Mettle was somewhat more allaid, and their Stomach not so very fierce, in *Augustus's* time; *Laberius*, who was excellent at that sport, was forced once by the Emperor to shew his Talent upon the Stage: in his Prologue, he complains that

*Necessity has no law.  
It was the will of Cæsar brought me hither,  
What was imagin'd for me to deny  
This Cæsar; when the Gods deny him nothing?*

But says he,

*—Ego bis tricenis annis actis sine nota,  
Eques Romanus lare egressus meo,  
Domum revertor Mimus. Nimirum hac die  
Una plus vixi mihi quàm vivendum fuit—*

*Twice thirty years have I liv'd without blemish;  
From home I came a Roman Gentleman,  
But back shall go a Mimick. This one day  
Is one day longer than I shou'd have liv'd.*

This may shew with what indignity our Poet treats the noblest *Romans*. But there is no other cloth in his Wardrobe. Every one must be content to wear a Fools Coat, who comes to be dressed by him. Nor is he more civil to the Ladies. *Portia*, in good manners, might have challeng'd more respect: she that shines, a glory of the first magnitude in the Gallery of Heroick Dames, is with our Poet, scarce one remove from a Natural: She is the own Cousin German, of one piece, the very same impertinent silly flesh and blood with *Desdemona*. *Shakespears* genius lay for Comedy and Humour. In Tragedy he appears quite out of his Element; his Brains are turn'd, he raves and rambles, without any coherence, any spark of reason, or any rule to controul him, or set bounds to his phrenzy. His imagination was still running after his Masters, the Coblers, and Parish Clerks, and *Old Testament Stroulers*. So he might make bold with *Portia*, as they had done with the Virgin Mary. Who, in

a Church Acting their Play call'd *The Incarnation*, had usually the *Ave Mary* mumbl'd over to a stradling wench (for the blessed Virgin) straw-hatted, blew-apron'd, big-bellied, with her Immaculate Conception up to her chin.

The Italian Painters are noted for drawing the *Madonna's* by their own Wives or Mistresses; one might wonder what sort of *Betty Mackerel*, *Shakespear* found in his days, to sit for his *Portia*, and *Desdemona*; and Ladies of a rank, and dignity, for their place in Tragedy. But to him a Tragedy in *Burlesk*, a merry Tragedy was no Monster, no absurdity, nor at all preposterous: all colours are the same to a Blind man. The Thunder and Lightning, the Shouting and Battel, and alarms every where in this play, may well keep the Audience awake; otherwise no Sermon wou'd be so strong an Opiate. But since the memorable action by the *Putney Pikes*, the *Hammersmith Brigade*, and the *Chelsey Cuirassiers*: one might think, in a modest Nation, no Battel wou'd ever presume to shew upon the Stage agen, unless it were at *Perin in Cornwall*, where the story goes that, some time before the year 88. the *Spaniards* once were landing to burn the Town, just at the nick when a Company of *Stroulers* with their Drums and their shouting were setting *Sampson* upon the *Philistines*, which so scar'd Mr. Spaniard, that they Scampered back to their Galions, as apprehending our whole *Tilbury Camp* had lain in Ambush, and were coming souse upon them.

At *Athens* (they tell us) the Tragedies of *Æschylus*, *Sophocles*, and *Euripides* were enroll'd with their Laws, and made part of their Statute-Book.

We want a law for Acting the *Rehearsal* once a week, to keep us in our senses, and secure us against the Noise and Nonsense, the Farce and Fustian which, in the name of Tragedy, have so long invaded, and usurp our Theater.

*Tully* defines an Orator to be, *Vir bonus dicendique peritus*. Why must he be a *good Man*, as if a bad Man might not be a good Speaker? But what avails it to Speak well, unless a man is well heard? To gain attention *Aristotle* told us, it was necessary that an Orator be a *good Man*; therefore he that writes Tragedy should be careful that the persons of his *Drama*, be of consideration and importance, that the Audience may readily lend an Ear, and give

attention to what they say, and act. Who would thrust into a crowd to hear what Mr. *Jago*, *Roderigo*, or *Cassio*, is like to say? From a Venetian Senate, or a Roman Senate one might expect great matters: But their Poet was out of sorts; he had it not for them; the Senators must be no wiser than other folk.

*Ben. Johnson*, knew to distinguish men and manners, at an other rate. In *Catiline* we find our selves in *Europe*, we are no longer in the *Land of Savages*, amongst Blackamoors, Barbarians, and Monsters.

The Scene is Rome and first on the Stage appears *Sylla's Ghost*.

*Dost thou not feel me, Rome? Not yet?*

One would, in reason, imagine the Ghost is in some publick open place, upon some Eminence, where Rome is all within his view: But it is a surprising thing to find that this ratling Rodomontado speech is in a dark, close, private sleeping hole of *Catiline's*.

Yet the *Chorus*, is of all wonders the strangest. The *Chorus* is always present on the Stage, privy to, and interested in all that passes, and thereupon make their Reflections to Conclude the several *Acts*.

*Sylla's Ghost*, tho' never so big, might slide in at the Key-hole; but how comes the *Chorus* into *Catilins Cabinet*?

*Aurelia* is soon after with him too, but the Poet had perhaps provided her some Truckle-bed in a dark Closet by him.

In short, it is strange that *Ben*, who understood the turn of Comedy so well; and had found the success, should thus grope in the dark, and jumble things together without head or tail, without any rule or proportion, without any reason or design. Might not the *Acts of the Apostles*, or a Life in *Plutarch*, be as well Acted, and as properly called a Tragedy, as any History of a Conspiracy?

*Corneille* tells us, in the *Examen* of his *Melite*, that when first he began to write, he thought there had been no Rules: So had no guide but a little *Common sence*, with the Example of Mr. *Hardy*, and some others, not more regular than he. This *Common sence* (says he) *which was all my rule, brought me to find out the unity of Action to imbroyl four Lovers by one and the same intreague.* *Ben. Johnson*, besides his Common sence to tell him that the *Unity of Action* was necessary; had stumbl'd (I know not how) on a



*Chorus*; which is not to be drawn through a Key-hole, to be lugg'd about, or juggl'd with an *hocus pocus* hither and thither; nor stow'd in a garret, nor put into quarters with the *Brentford* Army, so must of necessity keep the Poet to *unity of place*; And also to some *Conscionable time*, for the representation: Because the *Chorus* is not to be trusted out of sight, is not to eat or drink till they have given up their Verdict, and the *Plaudite* is over.

One would not talk of rules, or what is regular with *Shakespear*, or any followers, in the Gang of the *Strouling* Fraternity; but it is lamentable that *Ben. Johnson*, his Stone and his Tymber, however otherwise of value, must lye a miserable heap of ruins, for want of Architecture, or some Son of *Vitruvius*, to joyn them together. He had red *Horace*, had Translated that to the *Pisones*:

*Nec verbum verbo curabis reddere, fidus interpretes.*——

Ben.——*Being a Poet, thou may'st feign, create,  
Not care, as thou wouldst faithfully translate,  
To render word for word*——

And this other precept.

*Nec circa vilem, patulumque moraberis Orbem.*

Ben. ——*The vile, broad-trodden ring forsake.*

What is there material in this *Catiline*, either in the *Manners*, in the *Thoughts*, or in the *Expression*, (three parts of Tragedy) which is not word for word translation? In the *Fable*, or Plot (which is the first, and principal part) what see we, but the *vile broad trodden ring*? *Vile*, *Horace* calls it, as a thing below, and too mean for any man of wit to busie his head withal. *Patulum*, he calls it, because it is obvious, and easie for any body to do as much as that comes to. 'Tis but to plodd along, step by step in the same tract: 'Tis drudgery only for the blind Horse in a Mill. No Creature sound of Wind and Limb, but wou'd chuse a nobler Field, and a more generous Career.

*Homer*, we find, slips sometime into a *Tract* of *Scripture*, but his *Pegasus* is not stabl'd there, presently up he springs, mounts aloft, is on the wing, no earthly bounds, or barriers to confine him.

For *Ben*, to sin thus against the clearest light and conviction,

argues a strange stupidity: It was bad enough in him, against his Judgment and Conscience, to interlard so much fiddle faddle, Comedy, and *Apocryphal* matters in the History: Because, forsooth,

—his nam plebecula gaudet.

Where the Poet has chosen a subject of importance sufficient and proper for Tragedy, there is no room for this petty interlude and diversion. Had some Princes come express from *Salankemen* (remote as it is) to give an account of the battel, whilst the story was hot and new, and made a relation accurate, and distinctly, with all the pomp, and advantage of the Theatre, wou'd the Audience have suffer'd a Tumbler or Baboon, a Bear, or Rope dancer to have withdrawn their attention; or to have interrupted the Narrative; tho' it had held as long as a Dramatick Representation. Nor at that time wou'd they thank a body for his quibbles, or wit out of season: This mans Feather, or that Captains Embroidered Coat might not be touched upon but in a very short *Parenthesis*.

It is meerly by the ill-chosen Subject, or the ill-adjusting it, that the Audience runs a gadding after what is forreign, and from the business. And when some senceless trifling tale, as that of *Othello*; or some mangl'd, abus'd, undigested, interlarded History on our Stage impiously assumes the sacred name of Tragedy, it is no wonder if the Theatre grow corrupt and scandalous, and Poetry from its Ancient Reputation and Dignity, is sunk to the utmost Contempt and Derision.

Many have been offended with *Aristophanes* as accessory to the death of *Socrates*; but who so shall consider the State of affairs at that juncture, when *the Clouds* was acted, might sooner believe the Poets design was rather *previous*, (as we call it) to try the strength of a Party, by the Countenance of the People: And by the success of this Play, they discovered how far the interest of *Alcibiades* prevailed. *Alcibiades* was the dangerous man to the Government, too big for the Republick, and for *Aristophanes* himself.

*Socrates* came not to be judicially arraigned in twenty years after the Comedy. They first had made sure of his protector, and got him out of the way. Upon which, the Common-wealth party took heart, and wou'd make the Philosopher answer for the rare

accomplishments which *Alcibiades* had drawn from him, and so ill Employed.

*Socrates* should not have mocked at the *Old Religion*, till sure of some means to introduce a better. *Socrates* had not the gift of Miracles.

*Alcibiades* with his Companions cou'd learn from *Socrates* to blaspheme the established Worship: But were too sensual for a purer Faith, and Divine speculations.

Thereupon followed so many mad pranks amongst them: As that for example, when the Gods of the Town (set at every mans Door) were, as they had been so many Sign-posts, all in one night broken down. How would the People look, after this outrage? What cou'd they expect, but Hell to swallow 'em up all quick, the next morning?

*Aristophanes*, in a sober way, was not against a Reformation. He attempted an alteration, and wrought it Effectually. As particularly: The *Athenians*, wanting a true Calculation of the course of the Moon, were often in great confusion about their Holy-days. They kept Fast often when they should have Feasted, and other times had their Festival on a work day; and many times the Feast and Fast came a-pick-a-pack. To rectifie this, in that very Play (*the Clouds*) against *Socrates*, there the *Chorus* returns, and addresses to the Spectators, in this manner.

*As we were departing, the Moon (our Lady) met us,  
And bid us tell ye,*

*First, that she gives her love to you, and your Confederates.  
In the next place that she is angry with you, as ill dealt withal  
by you,*

*For her good turns to all of you, not in words,  
but Effectually.*

*In particular, every month She saves you two pence half-  
penny, in Lanthorn and Candle-Light:  
And then going abroad a-nights you cry, Hold, boy, there needs  
no Link, 'tis Moon-shine.*

*In other respects She likes you well,  
Saving that you are out in your Accounts  
most shamefully.*

*Jumbling all things hand over head confoundedly;  
In so much that the Gods threaten her immoderately:  
When their appetite is baulk'd, and they go home with hungry  
    Nostrils, because you want a good Almanac.  
For when you should be Sacrificing,  
Then are you at the Sessions, trying Felons and Pick-pockets.  
On the other hand, when 'tis Ember-week in Heaven,  
And all are Fasting, with an a-lack; and well aday:  
For the death of Memnon or Sarpedon;  
Then smoak your Hecatombs——*

By this, every body were convinced that the *form* by law established wanted amendment; the Priests from all parts were gather'd together; they were asham'd of their Calendar, Reform, Reform was the only cry amongst 'em; Not one *Nolumus*— In all the Convocation.

And thereupon *Meton*, the Mathematician was sent for, and set to work; And from thence our Chrono-graphers had a new *Epocha*.

From this place we may observe another reason for *Homer*, against the \*objection by *Plato*, to wit, that *Homer* had an eye to the Greek *Liturgie*, And that passage in *Homer* was to show *Sarpedons Fast* to be of *Divine Institution*.

This small Sally, or start out from the play is of greater Moment, is of more weight and importance, than all the Tragedies on our Stage cou'd pretend to. And yet for modern Comedy, doubtless our English are the best in the World.

\* vid page 105.



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## The Rapin Preface

This octavo, according to its title page, was licensed June 26, 1674; it was entered in the Stationers' Register on August 1 of the same year and advertised in the *Term Catalogues* for Michaelmas. A better-printed edition, mentioning Rymer as translator and author of the preface, appeared early in 1694. Motteux, in the *Gentleman's Journal* for December 1693, noted that the book, "Englished by Mr. Rymer with his admirable Preface, is being reprinted being very scarce before" (p. 419). When Rapin's works were collected in English in 1706, Rymer's was one of the few 17th-century translations allowed to remain. In the general preface to this edition, probably by Basil Kennet, Rymer's preface is singled out for praise: "The Learned Person who oblig'd the *English Reader* with the latter of those Pieces, increas'd his own Honour, by advancing that of his Native Country. The Judicious Preface, with which he adorn'd his Translation, gave him almost as eminent a Name among the *English Critics*, as his Author held among the French." This edition, with Rymer's preface and translation, was reprinted in 1716 and in 1731. The preface has been edited by Spingarn in the second volume of his *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*.

Translations of Rapin had begun with *A Comparison between Demosthenes and Cicero* in 1672, *A Comparison of Plato and Aristotle* in 1673, and two versions of *Reflections upon the Eloquence of these Times* in 1672 and 1673. Rapin was the first of the formalist critics to be translated into English (D'Aubignac was translated in 1684 and Le Bossu in 1695), and Rymer's translation, reasonably literal but effective, helped make him the most influential critic of this school in England, so that Dryden could write that his book "is alone sufficient, were all other critics lost, to teach anew the rules of writing" (*Essays*, I, 181). By the end of the century Le Bossu is more often mentioned, but by that time the influence of the French formalists was passing. Rapin is by no means the worst of them: he is a strict moralist and a believer in rules and formulas, but has one trait not often shown by his fellows—a love of literature. A critic who writes "I never read [Homer], or hear him read, but I feel, what is found in a Battel, when the *Trumpets* are heard" (I, xxxvii) does not quite rank with the Abbé d'Aubignac.

Rymer's translation had appeared anonymously, and he first claimed it three years later in *The Tragedies of the Last Age*. Direct references

to the preface are few and favorable. Several passages were used by Sir Thomas Pope Blount in compiling his *De re poetica* (1694). The anonymous translator of St. Évremond's *Mixt Essays* (1685) calls it "incomparable"—a fair return, since his statements about English literature are drawn from it without acknowledgment (text in Dryden, *Essays*, 2, 313–14). In the next century Thomas Birch in the articles on Spenser, Davenant, and Cowley in *A General Dictionary, Historical and Critical* (1734–41) quoted Rymer's discussion at length.

Rymer's style in this first work is almost fully formed, though less colloquial than it was to become. There is little hint of the extravagant denunciations to be found in later works; at the same time, there is little real appreciation. Men like Cowley and Davenant Rymer could understand, and they could be criticized by the application of neo-classic rules. And criticism by these rules had very little to do with appreciation: it is with some surprise that we later hear Rymer speak of "*Spencer, Cowley, and such names as will ever be sacred to me*" (p. 21). The citation of passages for comparison and analysis is here applied to English poetry practically for the first time. Rymer names Macrobius, Aulus Gellius, and Scaliger as precedents, but the idea really derives entirely from the last named. For his technique in criticism he owes something to the "French Grammaticasters" like Malherbe and the opponents of Corneille in the *Cid* controversy, but he could have been influenced also by such pamphlet criticism as *The Censure of the Rota on Mr. Dryden's Conquest of Granada* (1673), probably by Richard Leigh, and *Notes and Observations on the Empress of Morocco* (1674) by Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne. From works like these he learned to give a disparaging and occasionally humorous line-by-line criticism, a method carried further by Dennis in criticizing Waller in *The Impartial Critick*. The method, not entirely just, can reveal faults mercilessly, and Rymer wisely concerns himself with what he considers essentials rather than petty faults.

The preface contains at least hints of Rymer's future critical tenets. He states (with a rather marked emphasis on cudgels) the critic's function as corrector of poets; he identifies Aristotle's rules with reason, while emphasizing common sense rather than an appeal to rules; he objects to bloodshed in English tragedies; and although he condemns specific works he extols his countrymen and his language at the expense of all others. There is even an approach to the casual literary history of *A Short View*, though without the antiquarian emphasis found there. Rymer passes by Chaucer, whose language "was not capable of any Heroick Character," and gives Spenser scant consideration. The omission

of Milton which so astounded Joseph Warton (*Works of Alexander Pope*, London, 1822, 5, 173) may have been due to ignorance. Yet only a few years later Rymer promised a critique of *Paradise Lost*, "which some are pleas'd to call a Poem" (p. 76).

PAGE 1:9. *Castelvetro*: Lodovico Castelvetro (1505?–71), the most influential of Italian critics. His edition of Aristotle's *Poetics* with elaborate commentary was published in 1570 and expanded in 1576. Rymer need not have had first-hand knowledge of this work. French critics scorned Castelvetro, largely because he argued that pleasure—and, worse still, pleasure for the uneducated multitude—was the end of poetry, but they were most strongly influenced by his development of the unities and the idea of probability. For Rapin, he "is naturally of a morose Wit, and out of a cross humor makes it alwayes his business to *contradict Aristotle*, and, for the most part, *confounds* the Text, instead of explaining it. Notwithstanding all this, he is the most subtle of all the Commentators, and the Man from whom most may be learned" (*Advertisement*).

PAGE 1:10. The Accademia della Crusca, founded in 1572 to preserve the purity of the national language and literature, published its dictionary in 1612. In the controversy over Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* it played a part similar to that of the French Academy in the *Cid* controversy.

PAGE 2:3. Clément Marot (1496–1544) and Jean Antoine de Baïf (1532–85) were members of the Pléiade. For Rymer's comments on Marot's translation of the Psalms, see p. 103.

PAGE 2:4. The French Academy was informally organized about 1629 and taken under Cardinal Richelieu's protection in 1634. Rymer may already have been aware of Pellisson's *Histoire de l'Académie Française* (1653), which he was to use in *A Short View*.

PAGE 2:6. François de Malherbe (1555–1628), the poet and literary dictator who had considerable influence on the later course of French literature. Rymer's remark probably comes from Rapin, I, xxx; just possibly he already knew Boileau's famous lines (*L'Art poétique*, I, 131 ff.).

PAGE 2:7. Corneille's *Le Cid* (1636) gave rise to the literary controversy which popularized the new critical ideas and in which the French Academy acted as arbitrator. See p. 88 and Gasté, *La Querelle du Cid*.

PAGE 2:8. Rymer repeats this Restoration commonplace about the Elizabethans, though he certainly knew Sidney.

PAGE 2:18. Rymer may be following some list or index, but it is hard to account for Epicharmus among the philosophers.

PAGE 2:30. This statement is not in Aristotle, and the idea that poetry instructs is Horatian. Rymer has carried one step further Rapin's attempt to graft Horace onto Aristotle: "*History* proposes not virtue but imperfect, as it is found in the *particulars*; and *Poetry* proposes it free from all imperfections, and as it ought to be in *general*, and in the *abstract*. This made *Aristotle* confess that *Poesie is a better School of virtue, than Philosophy it self*, because it goes more directly to perfection by the *verisimilarity*, than *Philosophy* can do with the *naked truth*" (II, iv). Rapin gives a reference to Aristotle, *Poetics*, X, but was probably thinking of IX, 3—the statement that poetry is more philosophical than history. The word "philosophical" here may have caused Rapin's confusion between philosophy and history. The result is extraordinarily like Sidney's, who after disposing of the historian as unphilosophical points out that in moving us the poet is more effective than the philosopher himself (Smith, *Essays*, I, 171). Tate in his preface to *The Historie of King Richard II* (London, 1681) repeats Rymer's statement. The comparison between poetry and history is, of course, the commonplace on which Rymer builds much of his theory (see pp. 8:17, 25:1, 163:13).

PAGE 2:35. The statement that poets must be free, so difficult to reconcile with Rymer's formalism, comes from Horace, *Ars poetica*, 9–10: "Pictoribus atque poëtis/ Quidlibet audendi semper fuit aequa potestas." Spingarn suggests as Rymer's source Jonson, *Discoveries* (ed. Schelling, Boston, 1892), p. 79, a passage based on Heinsius. But almost every critic makes some mention of the idea. Rymer's use is perhaps echoed by Pope, *Essay on Criticism*, III, 90–3.

PAGE 2:37. This concept that the rules were not merely a codification of the practice of Greek drama but universal in application and similar to natural law was held by the entire French school of rules. Rymer's statement here is closest to Rapin, I, xii:

*Aristotle* drew the Platform of these Rules from the Poems of *Homer*, and other Poets of his Time, by the Reflections he had a long time made on their Works. I pretend not by a long Discourse to justify the necessity, the justness, and the truth of these Rules . . . onely I affirm, That these Rules well considered, one shall find them made onely to reduce Nature into method, to trace it step by step, and not suffer the least mark of it to escape us . . . they are founded upon *good Sense*, and sound Reason, rather than on Authority and Example.

For Rymer, even more than for Rapin, the practical result of this position is that the practice of the ancients becomes equivalent to the common sense of all ages. The latter part of Rymer's argument finds a very close parallel in Dacier, p. vii. See Dennis, *Remarks on Prince Arthur* (*Works*, 1, 55), and Gildon, "An Essay on the Art of the English Stage" (Rowe, *Shakespeare*, 7, x) for typical instances of the concept in English criticism. Pope's mention of "Nature methodiz'd" and of nature and Homer as the same (*Essay on Criticism*, I, 89, 135) may owe something to the Rapin passage.

PAGE 3:9. Averroës, 1126–98. His commentaries, translated from Arabic into Latin, were one of the first means by which Aristotle's *Poetics* became known in western Europe. Rymer here, and also in *A Short View*, p. 109, strains Averroës' argument. He is thinking, perhaps, of the passage: "Quintum genus [imitationis] est, quod per paralogismum fit: quo vtuntur Sophistæ poetæ, & est multum in vsu apud Arabes, vt cū dicitur, hostes nostros cornibus percutiemus, licet essent Sol & Luna. hoc enim totum est falsum, quod plurimum reperitur in fabulis poeticis Arabū" (*Aristotelis Opera*, Venice, 1550–52, 2, pt. 2, fol. 92<sup>r</sup>). But such poets are in a special category. While Averroës does censure Arabian poets for not inspiring virtue (*ibid.*, fol. 89<sup>v</sup>) he recognizes clearly that Arabian poetry has many species not found in Greek and must have its own rules.

PAGE 3:21. Spingarn refers to Bouhours, *Entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène* (1671): "C'est une chose singulière, qu'un bel esprit allemand ou moscovite, reprit Eugène, et, s'il y en a quelques-uns au monde, ils sont de la nature de ces esprits qui n'apparaissent jamais sans causer de l'étonnement. Le Cardinal Du Perron disait un jour, en parlant du Jésuite Gretzer: *Il a bien de l'esprit pour un Allemand*, comme si ç'eût été un prodigue qu'un Allemand fort spirituel" (ed. Radouant, Paris, 1920, p. 180).

PAGE 3:24. Rapin, II, xvi: "*Hugo Grotius*, and *Daniel Heinsius*, both *Hollanders*, have writ nobly enough in *Latin Verse*; but the great Learning wherewith they were fraught, hinder'd them from thinking things in that delicate manner, which makes the beauty."

PAGE 3:25. Rapin, II, xvi: "*Buchanan*, who is a *Scotch Poet*, has a Character compos'd of many characters; his wit is easie, delicate, natural, but not great or lofty." See also Rapin, I, xxxvii. George Buchanan (1506–62) was held in high regard as a Latin poet and also as translator of the *Medea* and *Alcestis* of Euripides into Latin.

PAGE 3:28. Rapin, II, xxiii: "The *English* have more of *Genius* for Tragedy than other people, as well by the spirit of their Nation which



delights in cruelty, as also by the character of their language, which is proper for great expressions."

PAGE 3:34. Rapin, II, xx.

PAGE 4:7. Rapin, II, xxiii.

PAGE 4:8. These remarks on language are common. Rymer is probably still following Bouhours (p. 40): "[La langue espagnole a] des termes vastes et résonnants, des expressions hautaines et farfaronnes, de la pompe et de l'ostentation partout."

PAGE 4:11. *Ibid.*, pp. 41-2: "[La langue italienne] tombe dans le ridicule. Car enfin elle n'a presque rien de sérieux: cet enjouement, qui lui semble si naturel, approche de la badinerie; la plupart de ses mots et de ses phrases sentent un peu le burlesque . . . Ajoutez à cela les mêmes terminaisons qui reviennent si souvent, et qui font une rime perpétuelle dans la prose." In theory, consonants were thought to be rough, vowels smooth. Dryden argued that Virgil used the caesura (i.e. elision) to temper the sweetness caused by overbalance of vowels in Latin (*Essays*, 2, 215). For Rymer's struggles with the problem of sweetness, see p. 7:20 and note, and p. 77.

PAGE 4:12. *Petrolin and Arloquin*: See note to p. 73:8.

PAGE 4:15. At this point Rymer ceases to follow Bouhours and goes back to 1640 for a condemnation of the French language. The reference is to Jules de la Mesnardière, *La Poétique*, p. 371: "Il est certain que nôtre Langue est muette en ces rencontres, & que par vne rudesse dont on ne sçait point les raisons, nôtre Nation si curieuse des choses de la politesse, ne peut encore souffrir les terms propres & naïfs de cette Passion enfantine, dont les plus secrettes délices sont composées de mignardises, de tendresses & de douceurs." Rymer's criticism of the French language is less severe than other English attacks: see, for example, Dryden, *Essays*, 1, 274, and Roscommon, *An Essay on Translated Verse*, ll. 24-30 (Spingarn, *Essays*, 2, 298); there is a late echo of these arguments in Stockdale, *An Inquiry into the Nature, and Genuine Laws of Poetry* (London, 1778), pp. 53-8.

PAGE 4:19. Bouhours p. 60: "Les Allemands ont une langue rude et grossière." The emphasis on the polish that a language receives through foreign contacts points forward to Rymer's later praise of Chaucer's supposed reforms (pp. 126-7).

PAGE 4:33. Robert Sheringham (1602-78), Hebrew and Arabic scholar. He is known for his *De Anglorum gentis origine disceptatio* (1670) which argued that the Angli were descended from Shem, not Japheth, and were one of the Gothic tribes who established an empire

in Cimmeria and Scythia, and who were led back into Europe by Wotan. This book refers (p. 359) to a treatise, "The Origin, Progress, and Excellence of the English Language," apparently as a work in progress. See R. F. Jones, *The Triumph of the English Language* (Stanford, 1953), pp. 288-9.

PAGE 5:1. Du Bellay scarcely "boasts of" the *Roman de la rose*, merely mentioning it as the earliest French book one could read (*Défense et illustration de la langue française*, 2, sec. 2). Étienne Pasquier (1529-1615), *Recherches de la France* (Paris, 1643), VII, iii, states: "De ce mesme temps (ie veux dire souz le regne de S. Louys) nous eumes Guillaume de Lorry, & sous Philippe le Bel Iean de Mehun, lesquels uns des nostres ont voulu comparer à Dante poëte Italien: Et moy ie les opposerois volontiers à tous les Poëtes d'Italie." See also Bouhours, p. 113. Sir Richard Baker mentions "John Moone, an English man, but a Student in Paris; who compiled in the French Tongue, *The Romant of the Rose*; translated into English by Geoffry Chaucer, and divers others" (*A Chronicle of the Kings of England*, London, 1643, p. 29 under Richard II). Bale, in his *Index Britanniae Scriptorum* (ed. Poole, Oxford, 1902, p. 233) had started this transformation of Jean de Meun by misreading a line in Hoccleve's *Letter of Cypyde*. John Moon he remained in the *Muses Mercury* for June 1707 (p. 128), only to become John Noon in Thompson's *Sickness* in 1745. See Spurgeon, *Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Allusion* (Cambridge, 1925), 1, 295 and 392, and Albert B. Freedman in *MLN*, 65 (1950), 319-25.

PAGE 5:3. For Rymer's views on Chaucer's language see pp. 125-7.

PAGE 5:7. Rapin (I, xi) condemns Petrarch's *Africa* along with *Orlando Furioso* and Marino's *Adone* for enormities caused by capricious fancy and ignorance of rules.

PAGE 5:15. This common judgment on Spenser continues well into the 18th century. See Chetwood, "To the Earl of Roscommon," prefixed to Roscommon, *An Essay on Translated Verse* (London, 1684); Dryden, *Essays*, 2, 28; Blackmore, *Preface to Prince Arthur* (Spingarn, *Essays*, 3, 238); Spence, *Polymetis* (London, 1747), p. 307. The author of *Spencer Redivivus* (London, 1687) admits Spenser's style as unintelligible as the obsoletest Saxon but vehemently defends his use of the marvelous, arguing that verisimilitude is necessary to the drama, not to the epic: marvels raise admiration, and we cannot deny such things without denying holy writ. The author here may be Edward Howard; see Leicester Bradner, "The Authorship of *Spencer Redivivus*," *RES*,

14 (1938), 323–6. The gist of the complaint against Spenser is that, like Shakespeare, he had not the judgment to control his fancy; hence what Rymer means by his “sharp judgment” is not clear.

PAGE 5:20. This censure of Ariosto is extremely common among French critics. Rymer’s remarks are based on Rapin, I, xi, xxiii, and II, iii, xvi; he is probably aware also of the controversy over *Gerusalemme liberata* in which the opponents of Tasso exalted Ariosto. See Bray, p. 186, and also Le Moyne, preface to *St. Louys* (Paris, 1666). The superstitious affectation of allegory can be more easily noted in his commentators than in Ariosto himself. Warton, *Observations on the Faerie Queene* (London, 1754), pp. 2–3, follows Rymer’s argument.

PAGE 5:31. Davenant’s *Gondibert* first appeared, incomplete in three books, London, 1651, in both quarto and octavo. The preface and Hobbes’ answer to it (both written when only two books of the poem were completed) had appeared previously at Paris, 1650, and were prefixed to the 1651 editions. Prefaces and poem (the latter still incomplete but slightly revised) were reprinted in the 1673 folio of Davenant’s works.

PAGE 6:1. *Aeneid*, III, 343.

PAGE 6:2. Davenant states that he chose a story from the distant past to be free from the fetters of historical truth, and because actions in the past appeared more glamorous. For place, he apologizes that he has “comply’d with the weakness of the generality of men, who think the best objects of their own country so little to the size of those abroad” (Spingarn, *Essays*, 2, 11–12).

PAGE 6:10. Davenant throughout his preface scorns the idea of poetic inspiration, and Hobbes sneers at the poet who would like to be thought only a bagpipe, though he admits that for ancient poets the invocation of the muse was justified (Spingarn, *Essays*, 2, 59). See Butler, *Hudibras*, I, i, 637–40:

We should, as learned poets use,  
Invoke th’ assistance of some muse;  
However criticks count it sillier  
Than jugglers talking t’ a familiar.

Le Bossu had considered an invocation mandatory (III, iv). See also R. A. Sayce, *The French Biblical Epic* (Oxford, 1955), p. 23.

PAGE 6:20. Dalga first appears near the end of the fragment (III, 6), a black and voluptuous beauty who stands in her window as Gondibert’s troops march by; she lures two soldiers into her chamber and is trying to send one away when still a third breaks in.

PAGE 6:21. BIRTHA and Astragon are the chief characters in a digression which, starting at I, 6, takes up half the extant poem. The wounded Gondibert comes to Astragon, who knows all nature's lore. His daughter BIRTHA, a child of nature with perfect court manners, falls in love with Gondibert, who is, however, in love with a princess.

PAGE 6:28. I, v, 76:

Whose Thrids by patient *Parcæ* slowly spunne,  
Ambition's hast has rashly ravell'd out.

In the 1673 version this became:

Whose Threds by destiny were slowly spunne,  
And by Ambition rashly ravell'd out.

PAGE 6:30. I, vi, 30. Both this and the former quotation occur in speeches, so Rymer could justify them as he does the inconsistencies in the Dryden passage.

PAGE 6:31. III, iv, 46–51. This heart-shaped emerald is given as nuptial pledge; it turns pale if the absent lord proves unfaithful. The diamond ring is in Marino, *Adone*, XIII, stanza 241.

PAGE 7:4. DAVENANT justifies his technical vocabulary by arguing that it is no shame to borrow learning and that a poet who instructs should also be instructed (Spingarn, *Essays*, 2, 26); Dryden followed DAVENANT, and "thought it not shame to learn" the proper terms which were used at sea (Preface to *Annus Mirabilis*, *Essays*, 1, 13). This position derives ultimately from the idea of the poet as universal genius (Plato, *Ion*, 537–8) and was dominant during the Renaissance. HOBBS disagreed with DAVENANT, listing language and metaphors from mean conversation and humble arts as indecencies, since persons of an epic poem could not be expected to be acquainted with such things (Spingarn, *Essays*, 2, 64); HOBBS reiterated this view a quarter of a century later in his preface to the *Odyssey* (*ibid.*, 2, 68). This view (but with differing arguments to support it) was the one accepted in the next century: e.g. POPE, *Works*, ed. Elwin and Courthope (London, 1871–89), 6, 107; JOHNSON, *Lives*, 1, 433–4. See also SWEDENBERG, pp. 338–9. Rymer is in agreement with the French critics, closest perhaps to Chapelain, who in the preface to *La Pucelle* argues that an epic poet must know everything but must avoid any show of erudition.

PAGE 7:10. *Jargon*: "applied contemptuously to any mode of speech abounding in unfamiliar terms, or peculiar to a particular set of persons"—*OED*, which assigns first use of the word in this sense to HOBBS, *Leviathan*, 1651.

PAGE 7:13. Davenant argued for his stanza that it is less monotonous than couplets without being less heroic; that it is pleasant to have a pause every four lines; that it is adapted to a plain and stately composing of music (Spingarn, *Essays*, 2, 19). To these arguments Dryden in the preface to *Annus Mirabilis* added that the quatrain was more noble, and also more difficult to write, since the thought had to be sustained through four lines (*Essays*, 1, 11–12). Rymer seizes upon this last point, as does Pope in the preface to his *Pastorals* (*Prose Works*, ed. Ault, Oxford, 1936, p. 301). On the other hand, the author of *Spencer Redivivus* (London, 1687), who reduced the *Faerie Queene* to couplets, argued in his preface that stanzas were too easy to write. For general discussion of verse forms in the epic, see Swedenberg, pp. 340–2.

PAGE 7:20. Rymer's censure of the *ottava rima* is not too clear. He had stated that the perpetual termination in vowels in Italian was sweet rather than grave (p. 4)—a phrase he echoed and applied to all rhyme in the preface to *Edgar* (p. 77); yet here he suggests that the percussion of feminine endings has to be sweetened, which can be done only by the repetition of rhymes. The entire passage heightens suspicion readers of *Edgar* might have about Rymer's ear for verse, though in a light vein Rymer does use stanza forms effectively.

PAGE 7:31. *Pybrach*: Guy de Faur de Pibrac, French politician and poet. His quatrains, first published in 1574, had a considerable vogue and were translated by Joshua Sylvester in 1605. Pibrac is mentioned not by Davenant but by Hobbes in his answer (Spingarn, *Essays*, 2, 56).

PAGE 7:38. Cowley's *Davideis* was published in 1656, incomplete in four books. Dr. Johnson remarked that "By the *Spectator* it has once been quoted, by Rymer it has once been praised, and by Dryden, in *Mac Flecknoe*, it has once been imitated; nor do I recollect much other notice from its publication till now in the whole succession of English literature" (*Lives*, 1, 49). See Jean Loiseau, *Abraham Cowley's Reputation in England* (Paris, 1931).

PAGE 8:15. The censure of Lucan rests eventually on Aristotle's statement that Herodotus would not be poetry even if versified (*Poetics*, IX, 2) and on that of Petronius condemning a poem on civil war (*Satyricon*, 118 ff.). Spingarn (*Essays*, 2, 331) lists occurrences of this commonplace. Scaliger (*Poetics*, I, ii) is almost alone in arguing that verse makes a poem, regardless of subject.

PAGE 8:17. Aristotle, *Poetics*, IX, 3.

PAGE 8:28. Stobaeus, *Florilegium*, MA, 9, quotes from Pythagoras: Ἀείσω συνατοῖσι. θύρας δ' ἐπιθέσθε βέβηλοι.

PAGE 9:3. The opening of the *Davideis* is:

I sing the *Man* who *Judahs* Scepter bore  
 In that right hand which held the *Crook* before,  
 Who from best *Poet*, best of *Kings* did grow  
 The two chief *gifts Heav'n* could on *Man* bestow.

Rymer has taken a hint from Horace, *Ars poetica*, 136 ff.

PAGE 9:22. *Episode of Sophonia* (i.e. Sofronia): *Gerusalemme liberata*, II, 14–53. Tasso wrote to Scipione Gonzaga on April 3, 1576: “Io ho già condannato con irrevocabil sentenza a la morte l’episodio di Sofronia, e perch’ in vero era troppo lirico, e perc’ al signor Barga ed a gli altri pareva poco conesso e troppo presto” (*Lettere*, ed. Guasti, Florence, 1853, I, 153). A year earlier he had been of a different opinion: “Ben è vero, ch’ in quanto a l’episodio d’Olindo voglio indulgere genio et principi, poichè non v’è altro luogo ove trasportarlo” (Letter to Scipione Gonzaga, April 15, 1575, *ibid.*, I, 63–4). Both these letters had been printed in *Lettere poetichi*, added to Tasso’s *Discorsi dell’ arte poetica* (Venice, 1587). Dryden perhaps borrows from Rymer here (*Essays*, 2, 27).

PAGE 9:24. While the *Davideis* is in heroic couplets, two songs by David in lyric meters are included. In a note Cowley writes, “For this liberty of inserting an *Ode* into an *Heroick Poem*, I have no authority or example; and therefore like men who venture upon a new coast, I must run the hazard of it. We must sometimes be bold to innovate.” The University of Michigan copy of Rymer’s translation (apparently a presentation copy) has added here in an early hand, “w<sup>ch</sup> I think is as well against reason as w<sup>th</sup>out example.”

PAGE 9:27. Sidney, *Apology*, in Smith, *Essays*, I, 195.

PAGE 9:36. Rymer repeats this in *A Short View*, p. 119.

PAGE 9:37. An echo of Sidney, “For Poetrie is the companion of the *Campes*” (Smith, *Essays*, I, 188 and note).

PAGE 10:11. Johnson, in his life of Cowley, comments:

Rymer has declared the *Davideis* superior to the *Jerusalem* of Tasso, “which,” says he, “the poet, with all his care, has not totally purged from pedantry.” If by pedantry is meant that minute knowledge which is derived from particular sciences and studies, in opposition to the general notions supplied by a wide survey of life and nature, Cowley certainly errs by introducing pedantry far more frequently than Tasso. I know not, indeed, why they should be compared; for the resemblance of Cowley’s work to Tasso’s is only



that they both exhibit the agency of celestial and infernal spirits, in which however they differ widely. (*Lives*, I, 55.)

PAGE 10:14. *Pope Urban VIII*:

The poems of Urban VIII (Maffeo Barbarini, 1568–1644) were published at Paris under the editorship of Peiresc in 1620, and were often reprinted: he was an admirer and imitator of Gabriello Chiabrera (1552–1638), who revived and perfected the Italian Pindaric, doubtless in imitation of Ronsard's Odes or the still earlier tentatives of Trissino, Minturno, and Alamanni. In all these poets the attempt was made to preserve the regularity of the Pindaric form; and Cowley's irregular Ode has little in common with theirs. (Spingarn's note in *Essays*, 2, 343–4.)

PAGE 10:25. Scaliger (*Poetices*, V) compares poets by their descriptions of tempests, etc., even though he does not compare them on descriptions of night. In *Poetices*, V, vi, comparing Apollonius and Virgil, he does quote the two passages Rymer quotes; his only comment is an insertion between the two, "Vulgaria inquam hæc, & plebeia oratione: illa planè Heroica." Macrobius (*Saturnalia*, V and VI) had quoted long passages to show Virgil's imitation of Greek and Latin poets. Aulus Gellius (Agellius is the usual medieval form) contributed nothing relevant here. Spingarn is unfair in saying that "Rymer's originality consists in carrying on the contrast in passages from Italian, French, and English poetry." Even in Scaliger there is no such detailed criticism, nor does Pasquier, who sets the Virgil passage against one from Ronsard (*Recherches de la France*, Paris, 1643, VII, xi) add much. Rymer's citation of authorities in this paragraph conceals his originality. A. S. Pease in his edition of the fourth book of Virgil's *Aeneid* (Cambridge, Mass., 1935, pp. 434–6 and 543), lists poetic descriptions of night, counting forty-seven in classical literature alone. Most of the passages that Rymer quotes are imitated by Otway in *The Orphan*, III, 494–503; the line, "And the perpetual motion standing still," suggests that Otway had read Rymer and approved his modification of Virgil.

PAGE 10:34. Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, III, 744–51.

PAGE 11:20. Scaliger, *Poetices*, V, vi.

PAGE 11:24. *Aeneid*, IV, 522–8.

PAGE 12:22. Probably *Orlando Furioso*, VIII, 79:

Già in ogni parte li animanti lassi  
Davan riposo ai travagliati spirti,

Chi su le piume, e chi su duri sassi  
 E chi su l'herbe, e chi su faggi o mirti:  
 Tu le palpebre, Orlando, a pena abbassi  
 Punto da' tuoi pensieri acuti ed irti;  
 Ne quel sì breve e fuggitivo sonno  
 Godere in pace ancho lasciar ti ponno.

Rapin, who had no great admiration for Ariosto, is responsible for the statement that his descriptions are masterpieces (II, xvi).

PAGE 12:26. Tasso, *Gerusalemme liberata*, II, 96; *Gerusalemme conquistata*, III, 93. The *Gerusalemme liberata*, though long completed, had been published in part in 1580, entirely in 1581, without Tasso's approval. From 1588–93 he remodeled the poem completely into *Gerusalemme conquistata*. Rymer's "repeats it entire in his *Hierusalem liberata*" is probably a slip of the pen.

PAGE 13:2. Statius, *Achilleis*, I, 621.

PAGE 13:9. The *Adone* of Giovanni Battista Marino (1569–1625) was published in Paris in 1620, dedicated to Marie de' Medici, with a long preface by Chapelain. Its voluptuous charm made it immediately popular, but with the straitening taste a reaction set in against it. The passage quoted is canto XIII, stanza 34.

PAGE 13:26. *Ariosto*: See note to p. 12:22.

PAGE 13:29. *Omnia noctis erant*: Varro's phrase, quoted by Seneca, *Epistolae morales*, LVI, 6.

PAGE 13:33. The first twelve cantos of Chapelain's *La Pucelle*, long expected, were published in 1656 and often reprinted. The last twelve lay in manuscript until 1886. The passage quoted is the opening of canto II. The first editions read the second line as, "D'un paisible sommeil endormant la nature." The reading Rymer quotes occurs in the "Troisiesme edition, reveüe & retouchée" (Paris, 1657).

PAGE 14:29. Pierre le Moyne's *St. Louys* was first published in 1651–53 and several times reprinted. Chapelain in the preface to *La Pucelle* praised its vigor. Rapin stated, "But there is not in the *French Tongue* any work, wherein is so much Poetry, as in the Poem of *St. Louis*; yet the Author is not *reserved* enough; he gives his *Wit* too much scope, and his *Fancy* alwayes carries him too far" (I, xxxi). The passage quoted is the opening of bk. VIII.

PAGE 15:19. These lines open Act III, scene ii of Dryden's *The Indian Emperor, or The Conquest of Mexico* (1665). Whether because of Rymer's praise or otherwise, these lines became very well known. In 1699 Tom Brown could parody them (*Familiar and Courtly Letters*,

London, 1700, p. 181), and later Pope parodied the opening line (*Dunciad*, II, 418). In 1779 Johnson spoke of this as a passage "which Rymer has made famous" (*Lives*, I, 337). Earlier he had set these lines against Shakespeare's in *Macbeth*, II, ii, 62:

Night is described by two great poets, but one describes a night of quiet, the other of perturbation. In the night of *Dryden*, all the disturbers of the world are laid asleep; in that of *Shakespeare*, nothing but sorcery, lust and murder, is awake. He that reads *Dryden*, finds himself lull'd with serenity, and disposed to solitude and contemplation. He that peruses *Shakespeare*, looks round alarmed, and starts to find himself alone. One is the night of a lover, the other, of a murderer. (*The Plays of William Shakespeare*, London, 1765, 6, 404-5.)

For the negative, Wordsworth:

To what a low state knowledge of the most obvious and important phenomena had sunk, is evident from the style in which Dryden has executed a description of Night in one of his Tragedies. . . . A blind man, in the habit of attending accurately to descriptions casually dropped from the lips of those around him, might easily depict these appearances with more truth. Dryden's lines are vague, bombastic, and senseless. . . . The verses of Dryden, once highly celebrated, are forgotten. (*Poetical Works*, ed. De Selincourt, Oxford, 1944, 2, 420.)

Nevertheless, Lounsbury's remark on Rymer, "This is very silly criticism, for the lines thus exalted, while respectable, are not in the least remarkable" (*Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist*, New York, 1901, p. 233), rather misses the point. We may not think the lines distinguished, but in his own time Rymer's judgment of them was upheld. See also Sutherland, *A Preface to Eighteenth Century Poetry* (Oxford, 1948), p. 169.

PAGE 15:32. Statius, *Sylvae*, V, iv, 3-6:

Tacet omne pecus volucresque feræque  
Et simulant fessos curvata cacumina somnos,  
Nec trucibus fluviis idem sonus; occidit horror  
Æquoris, et terris maria acclinata quiescunt.

Rymer and other admirers of Dryden's lines presumably recognized the indebtedness; but see Van Doren, *John Dryden* (New York, 1920), p. 13.

PAGE 16:7. *Adone*, XX, 114.

PAGE 16:24. *Adone*, XX, 114:

Taceano i venti . . .

Nel suo placido letto il mar dormiva,  
Del cui gran sonno il fremito s'undiva.

### *The Tragedies of the Last Age*

This volume was licensed July 17, 1677, and advertised in the *Term Catalogues* for Michaelmas of that year. Publication must have been shortly before August 20, 1677, as appears from Wycherley's letter quoted below, so the title page was considerably postdated. The publisher was Richard Tonson, brother to the more famous Jacob. The so-called second edition, according to its title page printed for Richard Baldwin, 1692, is merely the Tonson edition with a cancel title. Baldwin published *A Short View of Tragedy* at the same time, and emphasized the connection between the two books by putting "Part I" on the title page of the former. Motteux, reviewing *A Short View* in the *Gentleman's Journal*, wrote as the publisher would wish, that *Tragedies of the Last Age* had become very scarce and was now reprinted to be bound up with *A Short View* (December 1692, p. 15).

Immediate reactions are given by two personal letters. Wycherley, on August 20, 1677, wrote to the Earl of Mulgrave:

I had almost forgot to tell You, that, in your Absence, your favourite Plays, The King and no King, The Maid's Tragedy, and Rollo, are all torn in Pieces by a New Criticque lately publish'd by Rymer, which we intend Jack Markham shall answer. The Book is duller than his Play of Edgar, which he promises to publish as a Pattern for exact Tragedies. This last Piece is written after the Epistolary Way of Politick Fops, directed to M<sup>r</sup> Shephard, I suppose from one Room to another at the George and Vulture Tavern, when the Wine was dead, and the Spirits of the Brandy too much wasted by Burning; so that it will be no hard Matter for Jack Markham's Water to inspire him with a wittier Answer in Defence of his old Friends, Beaumont and Fletcher. (*Times Literary Supplement*, April 18, 1935, p. 257.)

Jack Markham I have been unable to identify, nor can I attach any particular significance to the George and Vulture.

Dryden's reaction was different. He was in the country, bored with

idleness, parsons, and his cousin's conversation. However, he writes to Dorset:

Mr Rymer sent me his booke, which has been my best entertainment hetherto: tis certainly very learned, & the best piece of Criticism in the English tongue; perhaps in any other of the modern. If I am not altogether of his opinion, I am so, in most of what he sayes: and thinke my selfe happy that he has not fallen upon me, as severely and as wittily as he has upon Shakespeare, and Fletcher. for he is the only man I know capable of finding out a poets blind sides: and if he can hold heere without exposing his Edgar to be censurd by his Enemyes; I thinke there is no man will dare to answer him, or can. (*Letters*, ed. C. E. Ward, Durham, 1942, pp. 13-14.)

The mention of a witty attack on Shakespeare suggests that Dryden is writing before finishing the book; that the addressee is Dorset, to a member of whose circle Rymer had dedicated the book, may account for the degree of praise. Dryden's more serious thoughts were the so-called *Heads of an Answer to Rymer*, written on the blank pages of Rymer's book; these were developed into the preface to *Troilus and Cressida* (1679) which—while it does not mention Rymer—must be taken as the only real answer to his work (see p. xxxv above).

One other immediate reaction was Samuel Butler's *Upon Critics Who Judge of Modern Plays Precisely by the Rules of the Ancients*. The poem—which does not mention Rymer by name—cannot be considered a reasoned answer; it is the immediate reaction of common sense against criticism by rules. The verses are general enough to serve as an attack on almost any Restoration critic with leanings toward the ancients, and they actually attack by anticipation the return to Greek dramatic form that Rymer was not to advocate until *A Short View*. Butler's lines were not published until 1759 (*Genuine Remains of Samuel Butler*, re-edited from MS. by Spingarn, *Essays*, 2, 278-81). Thus, like Dryden's *Heads* and the two letters already quoted, they were not a public comment on Rymer's work.

For that we must turn to Robert Gould. His satire, *The Playhouse*, written in 1685 and published four years later (with a dedication to Dorset) has a feeble quib:

Nor shall <i>Philaster, the Maids Tragedy</i> ,	}
Thy <i>King and no King, Fletcher</i> , ever dy,	
But stand in the first rank that claim Eternity:	

Yet they are damn'd by a pert, modern *Wit*;  
 But he shou'd not have censur'd, or not writ:  
 To blame good Plays, and make his own much worse,  
 Though I shall spare him, does deserve a Curse:  
 'Tis true, he can speak *Greek*, but what of that?  
 It makes men no more *wise* than Riches *fat*.  
 This *Maxim* then ought ne'r be forgot,  
 An *arrant Scholar* is an *arrant Sot*.

(*Poems*, London, 1689, p. 178.)

Gould's admitted ignorance of Greek and Latin may account for the tone of the last lines. He did, however, soften the charge later, dropping the adjective "pert" and deleting the undelivered curse. (*Works*, London, 1709, 2, 244; this text is reprinted in Summers, *Restoration Theatre*, London, 1934, pp. 297-321.)

Later comments on Rymer's dramatic criticism center on *A Short View*, save for noting the fantastic ideas of decorum in the earlier book. Still, this is perhaps Rymer's most effective and influential work. His basic theories are here stated wittily, sometimes maliciously, and effectively enough to command general agreement. The faults—ostentatious learning, loose organization, insensitivity—are not as apparent as in the later work. Rymer's real position, that the dramatic practice of the Elizabethans could not be reconciled to the current theory of literature, proved difficult to combat. Whether from Rymer's attack or otherwise, the three Beaumont and Fletcher plays lost popularity rapidly. Rymer himself, dedicating *A Short View* to Dorset, hints that his work was successful in spite of initial hostility.

PAGE 17. Rymer's title page has the motto,

Clament periisse pudorem  
 Cuncti pene patres; ea quum reprehendere coner  
 Quae gravis Æsopus, quæ doctus Roscius egit.

(Horace, *Epistolae*, II, i, 80-2.)

Roscius and Aesopus, in Rymer's context, are Hart and Mohun: see pp. 19 and 74.

PAGE 17. In the original edition the text is preceded by a table of contents in the form of an alphabetical index, and a notice that "an *Heroick Tragedy*, call'd EDGAR" is also to be printed.

PAGE 17. Fleetwood Sheppard (Shepherd or Sheppard), 1634-98, "ardent votary of Apollo, Bacchus, and Venus," courtier, wit, and indifferent poet. Sheppard was a constant member of Dorset's household,



and later became the patron of Prior and the friend of Dennis. He became a member of Gray's Inn in 1657, and perhaps Rymer first met him through this connection. See Brice Harris, *Charles Sackville* (Urbana, Ill., 1940), p. 182 and J. H. Wilson, *The Court Wits of the Restoration* (Princeton, 1948), p. 216.

PAGE 17:4. Copt Hall, Essex, seat of the earls of Middlesex, was at this time Dorset's residence.

PAGE 17:21. *Crantor and Chrysippus*: Crantor, c. 300 B.C., follower of Xenocrates and admirer of Homer and Euripides (Diogenes Laertius, IV, v-vi). Chrysippus, 280?-206 B.C., Stoic philosopher. The statement that he transcribed almost the whole *Medea* is in Diogenes Laertius, VII, iii. Rymer was thinking of Horace, *Epistolae*, I, ii, 3-4 (or Rapin's report of him, I, xxiv):

. . . [Homerus]

Qui quid sit pulchrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non  
Planius ac melius Chrysippo et Crantore dicit.

PAGE 18:2. See Rymer's more definite statement on the expense of plays, p. 94:31 and note.

PAGE 18:8. Rymer confuses Lycurgus, the Spartan lawgiver (9th or 8th century B.C.) with the Athenian orator (c. 395-25 B.C.) who ordered correct copies of the plays of the Greek tragic poets to be preserved in the archives. Dennis (*Works*, 2, 2) similarly confuses the two men with respect to Homer. Rymer's mistake probably came from La Mesnardière, p. AA.

PAGE 18:19. Rymer in regarding the unities as beauties, not essentials, differs from the French formalists and is nearer to the practical view of Corneille and Dryden. In the prologue to *Secret Love* in 1665 Dryden had classed the unities and rhyme among "dead colours," less important than the "living beauties" of plot. Rymer's phrase "mechanical part" was echoed by Dryden (*Essays*, I, 212), and twice by Dennis (*Works*, 2, 68, 386). Elsewhere Rymer does argue the formalist position that the unities proceed inevitably from the plot and are demanded by common sense and verisimilitude (p. 27). Gildon is at least more consistent in insisting that the unities are essentials, not beauties (*Laws of Poetry*, London, 1721, p. 200).

PAGE 18:23. *Monster in the Tempest*: see p. 41:6 and note.

PAGE 18:32. At first glance Rymer seems far more liberal here than his French sources which are apt to stress the need for learning as well as for judgment. La Mesnardière had argued, "ie ne me suis point arrêté aux opinions extrauagantes de ces personnes déreglées, qui

tiennent que la Poësie n'a pas besoin d'Enseignemens, & qu'avec le sens commun on peut connoître & produire tous les ouvrages de l'esprit" (p. TTT). D'Aubignac explains why:

[Concerning probability] some have said, That Reason and Common Sense [*sens commun*] are sufficient of themselves to Judge of all these things. I grant it, but it must be Reason and common Sense, instructed in the affairs of the Stage, and in what is design'd to be represented: For suppose, that a Man of good Sense [*bon sens*] should have never seen nor heard of a Play, and be brought to see one, without being told what it is he is carried to; 'tis certain that he will hardly know, whether the Players be true Kings and Princes, or only the Images of them; and when he does know, that all this is but a Fiction, yet will he scarce be able to judge of the Faults or Perfections of the Play, without making many Reflections to consider, whether what is represented be profitable or no? . . . it has often happened, that People of very good understanding have at first commended some Actions of the Stage for well invented things, which upon being better informed, they have found contrary to all Probability and Ridiculous. (II, 2.)

Since D'Aubignac's whole system is based on the need for probability, this tangle is almost enough to condemn him. It is against pedantry of this sort, and not against the rules themselves, that Molière sets himself: "Il semble, à vous ouïr parler, que ces règles de l'art soient les plus grands mystères du monde; et cependant ce ne sont que quelques observations aisées, que le bon sens a faites sur ce qui peut ôter le plaisir que l'on prend à ces sortes de poèmes; et le même bon sens qui a fait autrefois ces observations les fait aisément tous les jours, sans le secours d'Horace et d'Aristote" (*La Critique de l'École des Femmes*, in *Œuvres*, ed. Regnier, Paris, 1873–1900, 3, 357–8). This is almost the position of Rapin (I, xii) and later of Dacier (p. vii), as well as of Rymer himself. Rymer's common sense is always used in support of the rules, never to contradict them; in this passage he limits it to such fundamentals as probability and morality of a plot, for which unschooled judgment (or good sense, or common sense) suffices. The difference between Rymer and the French critics here can easily be exaggerated.

PAGE 18:35. *Women-judges*: Rymer again is a bit more liberal than the French; Huet, for example, would limit the judgment of women to madrigals, chansonettes, and epigrams, since judgment of the higher forms demanded, in addition to natural talent, study and reflection

(*Huetiana*, Paris, 1722, p. 175). Rymer regards reason as feebler in women than in men (p. 37), so again he is merely making distinction between what is axiomatic and what requires the application of reason and learning. Ferrand Spence in his preface to St. Évremond's *Miscellanea* (London, 1686) spells it out more elaborately:

Yet, let men say what they will, there is *such* a thing as *Good sense*, in the *General Notion* whereof every one does *agree as much* as in the *Idea* of a *Triangle*. I have *frequently* met with it in the *Pit* among the *Women*, who have *judged* with that *undebauch'd uprightness* and *Integrity*, that I could hardly find any *Imperfection*, left by *traduction* in their *Souls*: Their minds enjoy'd their *Native Purity*, were *unsophisticated* and *free* from all the *Illusions* of *Prejudice*, *Friendship*, or *Interest*. (Sigs. A7<sup>r</sup>–A8<sup>r</sup>.)

PAGE 18:38. The same figure had been applied to direct imitation of the ancients by Henry Reynolds in his preface to *Mythomystes* (c. 1633): "To the end wee may, if in this declining state of the world we cannot rectify our oblique one by their perfect and strait line, yet indeauour it" (Spingarn, *Essays*, 1, 149). In connection with this passage and Ferrand Spence's figure of the triangle quoted just above, Emerson Marks notes, "The frequency of geometric figures of speech in neo-classical criticism is more than a stylistic fad" (*Relativist and Absolutist*, New Brunswick, 1955, p. 31).

PAGE 19:5. Dennis takes over Rymer's image: ". . . I find it is the daily practice of our Empiricks in Poetry to turn our two Theatres into downright Mountebank Stages, to treat *Aristotle* and *Horace* with as contemptuous arrogance, as our Medicinal Quacks do *Galen* and the great *Hippocrates*" (Preface to *Iphigenia*, *Works*, 2, 390). Rymer carries the figure farther to include a reference to *catharsis*, a theory which obviously held no interest for him. Purgation is again mentioned in passing, p. 75:21.

PAGE 19:10. The argument that actors made bad plays succeed became common: e.g. Dryden, *Essays*, 1, 245, and Cibber, *Apology* (Everyman's Library), pp. 59–60. In this instance Dryden gives the best answer to Rymer:

'Tis evident those plays which he arraigns have moved both those passions [pity and fear] in a high degree upon the stage. To give the glory of this away from the poet, and to place it upon the actors, seems unjust. One reason is, because whatever actors they have found, the event has been the same, that is, the same passions

have been always moved. . . . I dare appeal to those who have never seen them acted, if they have not found these two passions moved within them. (*Heads of an Answer*, in Johnson, *Lives*, 1, 477–8.)

PAGE 19:10. Charles Hart (d. 1693) was the leading actor of the King's Company. Downes, prompter at the rival theater, described his acting:

. . . Mr. *Hart*, in the Part of *Arbaces*, in *King and no King*; *Amintor*, in the *Maids Tragedy*; *Othello*; *Rollo*; *Brutus*, in *Julius Cæsar*; *Alexander*, towards the latter End of his Acting; if he Acted in any one of these but once in a Fortnight, the House was fill'd as at a New Play, especially *Alexander*, he Acting that with such Grandeur and Agreeable Majesty, That one of the Court was pleas'd to Honour him with this Commendation; That *Hart* might Teach any King on Earth how to Comport himself. (*Roscious Anglicanus*, ed. Summers, London, n.d., p. 16.)

Downes singles out five of the six plays Rymer chose to criticize; the last sentence perhaps gives added point to Rymer's argument that Hart's royal manner made up for the lack of decorum in the plays. Since these plays were the monopoly of the King's Company, Rymer is unlikely to have seen the leading roles performed by anyone but Hart. A broadside elegy on Hart's death singles out Amintor and Arbaces as his tragic roles (Thorn-Drury, *The Little Ark*, London, 1921, pp. 47–9).

PAGE 19:20. Aristotle, *Poetics*, XIV, 2.

PAGE 19:23. Spingarn notes a close parallel in Racine's preface to *Iphigénie* (1675): "J'ai reconnu avec plaisir, par l'effet qu'a produit sur notre théâtre tout ce que j'ai imité ou d'Homère ou d'Euripide, que le bon sens et la raison étoient les mêmes dans tous les siècles. Le goût de Paris s'est trouvé conforme a celui d'Athènes. Mes spectateurs ont été émus des mêmes choses qui ont mis autrefois en larmes le plus savant peuple de la Grèce" (*Œuvres*, Paris, 1865–73, 3, 142–3). Rymer's "meridian" here (for parallel of latitude) and "latitude of Gotham" later (p. 134) hint at the root meaning of "climate," "A belt of the earth's surface contained between two given parallels of latitude" (*OED*, meaning 1); these belts, clearly defined by Ptolemy, were given astrological significance in antiquity. The astrological idea was gradually lost in the more obvious one that different climates (in the sense of temperature) produced different customs and tastes. The idea of climate could, as Rymer clearly anticipates, be used in defense of non-classical

literature. Dryden made a tentative approach in the *Heads of an Answer*: “. . . Shakespeare and Fletcher have written to the genius of the age and nation in which they lived; for though nature, as he objects, is the same in all places, and reason too the same, yet the climate, the age, the disposition of the people, to whom a poet writes, may be so different that what pleased the Greeks would not satisfy an English audience” (Johnson, *Lives*, I, 478). Dennis in *The Impartial Critick* made the idea of differing climates the initial point in his answer to Rymer (*Works*, I, 11–13; see Hooker’s note), and it frequently appears where taste is opposed to rules. The line of argument was to lead, as in Herder, to the romantic relativist position in which each climate or race or nation had its own literary forms. Neoclassical critics evaded such extremes. If rules were based on reason, uniformitarianism was difficult to avoid; but even rationalist critics would emphasize the need for studying the differences in manners and humors of different countries and might ascribe these differences to climate (e.g. Boileau, *L’Art poétique*, III, 113–14).

PAGE 20:7. Spingarn notes a close parallel in Hobbes’s preface to the *Odyssey*: “For in Fancie consisteth the Sublimity of a Poet, which is that Poetical Fury which the Readers for the most part call for. It flies abroad swiftly to fetch in both Matter and Words; but if there be not Discretion at home to distinguish which are fit to be used and which not, which decent and which undecent for Persons, Times, and Places, their delight and grace is lost” (Spingarn, *Essays*, 2, 70). Equally close is Dryden: “Fancy and Reason go hand in hand; the first cannot leave the last behind: and though Fancy, when it sees the wide gulf, would venture over, as the nimbler, yet it is withheld by Reason, which will refuse to take the leap, when the distance over it appears too large” (*Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, in *Essays*, I, 128). The antithesis between a driving force and a restraining force occurs in almost every work of neoclassic criticism and can be found (with some difference in terms) in other criticisms also. “Fancy” and “judgment” are the most usual terms, and these Rymer used in the Rapin preface (p. 3); here within the antithesis “reason” has about the same meaning as “judgment,” or as “discretion” in the Hobbes quotation. The antithesis has a long history in English criticism, but for Rymer Rapin is the principal influence; for Rapin the left-hand member is usually *esprit* or *génie*, and Rymer’s translation uses “wit,” “fancy,” or “genius” to translate either term. Obviously the meaning is to be found in the antithesis rather than in the separate terms.

PAGE 21:13. Rapin, II, xx: “The *Genius* of our (the *French*) Nation is

not strong enough, to sustain an action on the Theatre, by moving only *terror* and *pity*."

PAGE 21:15. Allesandro Tassoni, *De' Pensieri diversi* (Venice, 1665), X, xiv, p. 368.

PAGE 21:17. Tasso's tragedy, *Il Re Torrismondo*, was published in 1587. Rymer's text reads *Torrismodo*, probably a misprint.

PAGE 21:25. Rymer's account of the origin of tragedy (also p. 94) owes less to old authors than to La Mesnardière (p. 6) and D'Aubignac (III, ii); p. 22:3-7, is a direct quotation from D'Aubignac, who elaborated the explanation Zenobius (V, 40) has given of the proverb. See Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyramb Tragedy and Comedy* (Oxford, 1927), pp. 166-8. Most writers followed the etymology given by Scaliger (*Poetices*, I, vi), who states that tragedy comes from *τράγος*, in honor of the divinity to whom a goat was sacrificed; this goat was given as a prize. Rymer, noting the inconsistency, rejects the latter part of the explanation; hence his attempt to amend Horace (*Ars poetica*, 220) with a line from Juvenal, I, 44. The inconsistency is still unresolved: "*Τραγῳδός* may well mean (as has often been held) the 'singer at the goat-sacrifice' or (a very ancient view) the 'singer for the goat-prize'. . . . The two may even be reconciled, if the goat was first won and then sacrificed. A more precise conclusion is impossible" (Pickard-Cambridge, p. 165).

PAGE 22:13-16. Almost literally from Aristotle, *Poetics*, IV, 13. That Sophocles gave "the utmost perfection" to tragedy was, in the neo-classical theory of growth and decay of genres, an almost automatic corollary, which Rymer carries to its logical conclusion when he repeats the phrase in *A Short View* (p. 94). Aristotle's sketch of the rise of tragedy is difficult to reconcile with our knowledge of Greek drama; still, Dryden's comment on Rymer's interpretation is rather rash: "Another obscurity is, where he says Sophocles perfected tragedy by introducing the third actor; that is, he meant, three kinds of action: one company singing, or another playing on the musick; a third dancing" (*Heads of an Answer*, Johnson, *Lives*, I, 476).

PAGE 22:35. For this idea that the poet had to be even more careful than God Almighty in administering justice Rymer later (p. 26) coins the term "poetical justice." Here, as often, Rymer gives a witty turn to a commonly held idea. The clearest statement in antiquity is Plato's: "We shall have to say that about men poets and story-tellers are guilty of making the gravest misstatements when they tell us that wicked men are often happy, and the good miserable; and that injustice is profitable when undetected, and that justice is a man's loss and another's gain—



these things we shall forbid them to utter, and command them to sing and say the opposite" (*Republic*, 392, B; see also *Laws*, 660, A). The logical extension of the idea was that the poet should not merely make virtue agreeable and vice odious but should show one rewarded and the other punished. The only point at issue was whether an action could be pleasing (or, what was almost the same thing, useful) if justice were not carried out during the action. Rymer, as always, makes the ideal into a rule. Even his French predecessors realized that poetical justice was contrary to Greek tragedy and that not all tragic subjects could be so treated. La Mesnardière agreed that it was best to carry out this exact justice, but that if the innocent suffered, as did Antigone, Hippolytus, and Alcestis, they were to be publicly praised; and that if the wicked were not punished they should at least be threatened with divine vengeance, as were Atreus, Clytemnestra, and Medea (pp. 223-5). This was essentially the position of D'Aubignac (I, 1); Corneille, less rigid, argued that no rule was necessary since one naturally hated vice and loved virtue. See Bray, pp. 81-2. But the more rigid principle could always be invoked: the French Academy, for example, objected that vice was not punished in the *Cid* (Gasté, p. 372). In England also the idea was familiar, and not only in works of the critical tradition: Caxton had praised the *Morte d'Arthur* for showing how virtuous knights "came to honour, and how they that were vicious were punished," while Ascham attacked the same work for rewarding vicious actions. As a formal critical dogma the idea is found in Sidney and Jonson, and was well enough established to be ridiculed by Wycherley in the prologue to *The Plain Dealer* (1674). Dryden had accepted the idea in *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (*Essays*, I, 50) and in the preface to *Tyrannic Love* (*Works*, 3, 377-8); and in the *Heads of an Answer* he argued that the ancients did not administer "poetical justice, of which Mr. Rymer boasts, so well as we," (Johnson, *Lives*, I, 475), though he slips almost immediately back to the position of "rendering virtue always amiable, tho' it be shewn unfortunate; and vice detestable, though it be shewn triumphant" (*ibid.*, p. 477). In general the idea was accepted until Addison attacked it in *Spectator*, 40, and it found its strongest champion in Dennis (*Works*, 2, 18-22, with Hooker's notes; see also C. C. Green, *Neo-Classic Theory of Tragedy*, Cambridge, Mass., 1934, pp. 139-49).

PAGE 23:5. Aristotle, *Poetics*, IV, 3.

PAGE 23:22. *Poetics*, IX, 3. Aristotle wrote φιλοσοφώτερον καὶ σπουδαιότερον. Rymer again quotes the phrase in reverse order in

*A Short View*, p. 163, but coming closer to the Greek; he had quoted it in English in the Rapin preface, p. 8.

PAGE 23:27. *Rollo*: This play, better known by its alternative title, *The Bloody Brother*, now seems of less merit than the other plays that Rymer examines. The Restoration, however, valued it highly. It was one of the few plays we know to have been acted during the Commonwealth period (Sprague, *Beaumont and Fletcher on the Restoration Stage*, Cambridge, Mass., 1926, p. 4), and it appeared with *A King and No King*, *The Maid's Tragedy*, and *Othello* among the plays acted at the Red Bull soon after the Restoration (*ibid.*, p. 10). Edward Howard in his preface to *The Woman's Conquest* (1671) ranked it with *Catiline*, *The Maid's Tragedy*, *The Cardinal*, and *The Traitor* among the best of English tragedies. Langbaine in 1691 speaks of it as "a Tragedy much in request; and notwithstanding Mr. Rymer's Criticisms on it, has still the good fortune to Please" (*An Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, Oxford, 1691, p. 207). Dryden, in *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, had singled it out:

I have taken notice but of one tragedy of ours, whose plot has that uniformity and unity of design in it, which I have commended in the French; and that is *Rollo*, or rather, under the name of *Rollo*, the story of Bassianus and Geta in Herodian: there indeed the plot is neither large nor intricate, but just enough to fill the minds of the audience, not to cloy them. Besides, you see it founded upon the truth of history, only the time of the action is not reduceable to the strictness of the rules; and you see in some places a little farce mingled, which is below the dignity of the other parts. (*Essays*, I, 60.)

Rymer takes up Dryden's criticisms, arguing that the design is not simple, that the truth of history is not suitable, and that the comic scenes are the play's only saving grace. Downes (*Roscius Anglicanus*, pp. 5-6) gives the cast Rymer probably saw:

Rollo,	Mr. Hart.
Otto,	Mr. Kynaston.
Aubrey,	Major Mohun.
La Torch,	Mr. Burt.
Dutchess,	Mrs. Corey.
Edith,	Mrs. Marshal.

Of the two texts available, Rymer used the 1640 quarto, "Written by John Fletcher Gent." The play (which in the 1639 quarto is said to

be by B.F.J.) is probably by Fletcher and Massinger, perhaps with the assistance of Jonson (Oliphant, *Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher*, New Haven, 1927, pp. 459 ff.).

PAGE 23:27. The story is in Herodian, IV; Dryden (see preceding note) had already pointed out the source.

PAGE 24:2. *Tragedy by Polemon*: actually the "Ἀγθός of Agathon (Aristotle, *Poetics*, IX, 7).

PAGE 24:5. Aristotle, *Poetics*, IV, 5.

PAGE 25:5. Rymer's ideal plot for *Rollo* is patterned after that of Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, which he discusses later, and is influenced by Aristotle, *Poetics*, XIV, 4. It also owes a little to the madly logical conclusion of Rymer's own *Edgar*.

PAGE 25:22. "Young Aubrey," according to the play, is fifty-seven years old (IV, ii).

PAGE 26:26. Spingarn (*Essays*, I, lxxiii ff.) points out that the term "poetical justice" seems to be Rymer's own invention, and that in no continental language is there an equivalent term. Dryden echoed it in the *Heads* and again in the *Troilus and Cressida* preface in 1679 (*Essays*, I, 210; this last is the earliest instance recorded in the *OED*). The idea behind the phrase Rymer had already discussed (p. 22:35 and note); his next use of it (p. 27) as a contrast to "historical justice" shows again the special meaning Rymer would give it; "poetical gratitude" (p. 163) is similarly constructed.

PAGE 27:17. This particular concept of poetic justice ultimately rests on Aristotle's argument (*Poetics*, XIII, 2) that deserved misfortune arouses neither pity nor fear; Rymer is at least aware of the difficulty of reconciling the demands of rigid justice with the ideas of Aristotle. His immediate source here is La Mesnardière, pp. 68–9. The position is close to Dacier's, that involuntary faults are most suitable, since ordinary ones are too common and well known (p. xiii). Butler, while accepting the idea of poetic justice, sneers at this refinement:

No longer shal Dramatiques be confind  
To Draw tru Images of al Mankinde,  
To Punish in Effigie Criminals,  
Reprieve the Innocent, & hang the False;  
But a Club-Law <to> execute & kill,  
For nothing, whom so ere they Please, at will,  
To terrify Spectators from committing  
The Crimes they did, & sufferd for, unwitting.  
(Spingarn, *Essays*, 2, 279.)

PAGE 27:30. Rymer later expands this, p. 32. Dryden, in the *Heads of an Answer*, replies: "And Rollo committing many murders, when he is answerable but for one, is too severely arraigned by him; for it adds to our horror and detestation of the criminal: and poetick justice is not neglected neither; for we stab him in our minds for every offence which he commits; and the point, which the poet is to gain on the audience, is not so much in the death of an offender as the raising an horror of his crimes" (Johnson, *Lives*, I, 479).

PAGE 27:36. Rymer's argument that justice cannot be left to a Christian hereafter is taken over by Dennis in defending poetic justice against Addison (*Works*, 2, 21). The opposite view was stated in an anonymous poem answering Rymer's *A Short View*:

Pray where's the Fault (since Tragedy must deal  
In Deaths or not be Tragedy) to instill  
The certain knowledge, of a future state,  
For retribution . . .

("A Manuscript Poem to Thomas Rymer," *PQ*, 30 [1951], 219.)

PAGE 28:32. *first four Scenes*: The 1640 quarto divides scenes in the continental manner: less than 250 lines are spoken before the combat begins.

PAGE 28:38. The statement occurs in D'Aubignac, II, i, and IV, vii; Le Bossu, II, ii; and Rapin, II, xx.

PAGE 29:26. Rymer in this synopsis of *Phoenician Women* softens the character of Eteocles to make his point. Polynices only brings an army to Thebes after Eteocles had refused him.

PAGE 30:5. There is nothing in the play to indicate that Eteocles knew the Thebans would be victorious. Rymer's report of the combat is also distorted: Eteocles, the victor, was killed spoiling the dying Polynices of his armor; his tender sighs were for his mother.

PAGE 30:12. *Phoenician Women*, 1446.

PAGES 30:22–31:9. *Ibid.*, 798, 351–2, 934, 867, 876–7, 67, 1426 and 868, 1611, 1612–14, 1593, 1556, 1065–6, 343, 624, 1503, 1306, 255, 334, 258, 888, 637.

PAGE 31:16. *Aeneid*, I, 231.

PAGE 33:32. Reading *he* for *who* would reduce this to at least Rymeresque syntax. "Bishop" Teiresias is prompted by the same mood as are the colloquialisms in Rymer's quotations from Greek tragedy.

PAGE 34:6. *Poetics*, VI, 15.

PAGE 35:17. Seneca, *Hippolytus*, 607. Rymer quotes this again on p. 158.

PAGE 36:18. Sallust, *Bellum Catininae*, XXV, 1–2.

PAGE 37:2. A quibble. Had Edith committed the murder she would have fallen foul of the rule that “in Poetry no woman is to kill a man, except her quality gives her the advantage above him” (p. 65).

PAGE 37:27. Actually, Hamond’s words in answer to Rollo’s question, “Who sent thee?” are: “My Brother, and the base malicious Office thou mad’st me do to Aubrey” (V, ii). Cf. *Aeneid*, XII, 948: “Pallas te hoc volnere.”

PAGE 37:37. Herodian, IV.

PAGE 39:5. *Aeneid*, XI, 90.

PAGE 39:36. The astrologer scene (IV, ii) is sometimes considered Jonson’s share of the play (Oliphant, *Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher*, p. 460).

PAGE 40:18. *A King and No King*: Like *Rollo*, this play enjoyed an almost continuous stage history until the end of the Restoration period. An attempt had been made to act it during the Commonwealth (Sprague, *Beaumont and Fletcher on the Restoration Stage*, p. 3), and it appears on the list of Red Bull plays soon after the Restoration (*ibid.*, p. 10). Langbaine says that the play, “notwithstanding its Errors discover’d by Mr. Rymer in his *Criticisms*, has always been acted with Applause, and has lately been reviv’d on our present Theatre with so great success, that we may justly say with *Horace*, *Hæc placuit semel, hæc decies repetita placebit*” (*An Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, p. 210). Dryden, in answer to Rymer, wrote:

The best of their designs, the most approaching to antiquity, and the most conducing to move pity, is the *King and No King*; which, if the farce of Bessus were thrown away, is of that inferior sort of tragedies, which end with a prosperous event. . . . The taking of this play, amongst many others, I cannot wholly ascribe to the excellency of the action; for I find it moving when it is read: ’tis true, the faults of the plot are so evidently proved, that they can no longer be denied. The beauties of it must therefore lie either in the lively touches of the passion; or we must conclude, as I think we may, that even in imperfect plots there are less degrees of Nature, by which some faint emotions of pity and terror are raised in us. (*Essays*, I, 212; Dryden had sketched an earlier answer in the *Heads*, Johnson, *Lives*, I, 478.)

The seventh quarto, 1676, gives the cast (I quote only part) as follows:

Arbaces – Mr. Hart.

Tigranes – Mr. Kynaston.

Mardonius – Mr. Mohun.

Bessus – Mr. Lacy or Mr. Shottrell.

Arane – Mrs. Corey.

Panthea – Mrs. Cox.

Downes (p. 5) preserves an earlier cast in which Burt played Tigranes and Nell Gwyn, Panthea. Rymer's quotations seem to be from the seventh quarto, 1676.

PAGE 40:19–33. Athenaeus, VI, i.

PAGE 41:2. For Rymer's views on the importance of titles, see p. 60:26 and note.

PAGE 41:6. *Duke Trinckelo*: This and the preceding reference to the monster in *The Tempest* (p. 18) are Rymer's only references to a play of Shakespeare other than *Othello* and *Julius Caesar*. Rymer, giving Trinculo a duke's title, is thinking of the Dryden-Davenant adaptation of *The Tempest*.

PAGE 41:7. Rymer's simplified statement of a plot owes something to the arguments prefixed to classical plays, something to Aristotle's synopses of *Iphigenia in Tauris* and the *Odyssey* (*Poetics*, XVII); "The rest is all Episode" echoes the last sentence of Aristotle's *Odyssey* synopsis.

PAGE 42:19. *A King and No King*, I, i, 88–90.

PAGE 42:24. The rule that kings in tragedy were heroes *ex officio* is a corollary to the theory that poetry differed from history in presenting what was ideally true. The extreme of royal decorum had been demanded by La Mesnardière:

. . . vn Roy qui paroist au Théâtre, doit estre si courageux qu'il n'apprehende aucun danger, & ne treuve rien d'impossible à la force de ses armes legitimemēt occupées. Il doit estre si prudent, qu'il n'ait iamais aucun sujet de rétracter ses iugemens, ne d'en condamner les succès. Il doit estre si liberal, qu'il fasse épreuuer à ses peuples qu'il est le dispensateur, & non pas le voleur public des richesses de son Etat. Enfin, il doit estre si bon, qu'il viue avec ses sujets comme il eût voulu que le Prince eût traité avec lui-mesme, s'il eût été homme priué. . . . Bref il faut que ce Personnage si important à l'Vnivers, ait toutes les perfections qui ne se treuuent d'ordinaire qu'en plusieurs Princes séparez; puisque le Poëme Tragique doit imiter les Actions des Personnes éminentes, & mesme des plus parfaits qui soient dans ce noble degré. (P. 120; see also p. 36.)

Probably no king save Rymer's Edgar fit this description. Such a figure can serve as a force of justice outside the events of a tragedy, but can



hardly be a tragic protagonist. But this idea of royal decorum is also stressed in D'Aubignac (II, i) and Rapin (I, xxv), and by Corneille in the *examens* to his plays. Largely through Corneille the ideas penetrated England, but they were not unknown before. Amintor in *The Maid's Tragedy* felt almost too much the respect due to kings. Dryden's Almanzor was severely censured for his conduct toward a king, and Otway in the prologue to *Don Carlos* (1676) complained:

. . . The Fame and Memory of Kings  
Were to be treated of as sacred Things.  
Not as they're represented in this Age,  
Where they appear the Lumber of the Stage!  
Us'd only just for reconciling Tools,  
Or what is worse, made Villains all, or Fools.

Rymer's statement of the rule was echoed by Dryden (*Essays*, I, 214), and Tate even applied it to Shakespeare's *Richard II*: "I have everywhere given him the Language of an Active, Prudent Prince, Preferring the Good of his Subjects to his own private Pleasure. . . . Nor cou'd it suffice me to make him speak like a King (who as Mr. Rhymer says in his *Tragedies of the last Age considered*, are always in Poetry presum'd Heroes) but to *Act so too*, viz, with *Resolution* and *Justice*" (*The History of King Richard the Second*, London, 1681, preface).

PAGE 43:1. Eighteenth-century commentators defended these plays against Rymer's charges of improbability and indecorum. Since their arguments will be noted later, in the discussion of *Othello*, one example will serve here:

Mr. Rhymer flings the most virulent of all his invectives against *Othello* and *Arbaces*, falsely deeming all the Faults of those Characters to be so many Charges against the Poets; whereas their Intent [was] not to paint *Perfection* but *Human Nature*, to blend the *Virtues* and *Vices* together, so that both may spring from the same *Temper*, and, like *handsom* and *ill-favour'd Children*, both still bear a *Resemblance* to their *Sire*. To do this well is one of the highest Efforts of Poetry. *Arbaces*, like his great Pattern *Achilles*, has *Virtues* and *Vices* in the Extreme. His *Violence* makes us expect some dreadful Effect, and it therefore soon hurries him into an Attempt to commit *Incest*. He is to raise *Terror* and *Anger*, not *Pity* and *Love*; and Mr. Rhymer having the same *Choler* in his *Temper*, ridiculously took fire, and furiously attack'd his own *Shadow*. (Seward, in *Works of Beaumont and Fletcher*, London, 1750, I, 182.)

PAGE 43:4. *A King and No King*, I, i, 148.

PAGE 43:9. Bajazet's cage was famous in its own right, and the reference here need not imply knowledge of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*; if a source is needed, it may be a romance like *Asterie, ou Tamerlan* (Paris, 1675, translated 1677). See Summers, *Playhouse of Pepys* (London, 1935), pp. 440-1.

PAGE 43:18. *A King and No King*, V, iv, 167, 160, 154, 135, 190.

PAGE 44:16. Dryden may have read this before writing the preface to *All for Love* (*Essays*, I, 193). Gildon, in "An Essay on the Art of the Stage," takes over the idea and uses it to defend the rules against an appeal from them to nature (Rowe, *Shakespeare*, 7, ix). Voltaire's comment on *Julius Caesar*, I, ii, 119, "He had a fever when he was in Spain," is perhaps based on Rymer: "Cela est naturel; oui: mais c'est le naturel d'un homme de la populace qui s'entretient avec son compère dans un cabaret. Ce n'est pas ainsi que parlaient les plus grands hommes de la république romaine" (*Œuvres*, Paris, 1877-85, 7, 446).

PAGE 44:18. Tom Coryat (1577?-1617), author of the *Crudities*, was semiofficial buffoon at the court of James I, allowing himself to be the victim of courtiers' jests.

PAGE 47:14-25. *Aeneid*, II, 575-6, 588, 594-5; Rymer reads *furor* for *dolor*. The lines on Helen are not in the codices, and were first given by Servius in his commentary; he states that they were excised by Varus and Tucca but gives no reason.

PAGE 49:15. Suetonius, *Nero*, XXI, 3.

PAGE 49:19. Sperone Speroni (1500-88), professor of logic and author of dialogues and lyrical poems as well as of *Canace* (Venice, 1548), using the same story as the lost *Aeolus* of Euripides. Du Bos was to describe it as "one of the best tragedies extant in the Italian language" (*Critical Reflections on Poetry*, trans. Nugent, London, 1748, I, 99). John Addington Symonds' criticism of the play contrasts oddly with Rymer's: "In order to justify the exhibition of incest in this repulsive form, there should at least have been such scenes of self-abandonment to impulse as Ford has found for Giovanni and Annabella; or the poet might have suggested the operation of agencies beyond human control by treading in the footsteps of Euripides" (*Renaissance in Italy*, London, 1881, 5, 130). Rymer's quotation comprises two parts of Macareo's speech, Act II, (*Canace*, Venice, 1597, pp. 28-9).

PAGE 50:8. The mysterious illness of Antiochus Soter was diagnosed only when the physician discovered that his pulse became irregular when his stepmother Strationice came near (Plutarch, *Demetrius*, XXXVIII; Appian, *Syrian Wars*, X). The story had been treated as a tragicomedy,

*La Stratonice ou le malade d'amour*, by Brosse in 1644. D'Aubignac (II, i) argues that the story is unfit for tragedy since the hero is in bed so much of the time.

PAGE 50:13. Racine's *Phèdre*, first acted January 1, 1677 (NS), was probably not yet known to Rymer. Racine in his preface emphasized several ideas compatible with Rymer's analysis of the story. *Phèdre* is not wholly guilty nor wholly innocent, and her crime is the punishment of God rather than the effort of her will; she does not herself accuse Hippolyte, since such baseness would not be decorous; Hippolyte is not blameless since his death then would cause more indignation than pity; throughout the play passions are presented to show what disorders they cause, and the lightest thought of a crime is punished as much as the crime itself. See also D'Aubignac, III, v, and Du Bos, *Critical Reflections on Poetry*, I, 99. Gildon follows Rymer in arguing that Euripides alone has preserved the modesty of Phaedra's character (*A New Rehearsal*, London, 1714, p. 66).

PAGE 50:19. Euripides, *Hippolytus*, 277.

PAGE 50:24-34. A digest of Phaedra's speeches, *ibid.*, 198-203, 209-11, 215-22, 239-49; the quoted Greek is from line 241.

PAGE 51:6. *Ibid.*, 305-12, 347-61.

PAGE 51:24. Dennis in his *Remarks on Prince Arthur* comments:

. . . *Phædra*, in the Scene in which she discovers her Love for her Son, speaks too Philosophically either for her Sex or for her present Condition. For a Speculative or a Sententious Discourse; besides, that it puts a stop to the Action of the Poem, is by no means the Language of a very violent Passion. I the rather mention this, because Mr. *Rymer*, who has Translated this Scene of *Euripides*, in his Observations upon the Tragedies of the last Age, has been so far from finding this fault, that he rather seems to mistake it for an Excellence. (*Works*, I, 74.)

PAGE 52:4. Euripides, *Hippolytus*, 373-421; the quoted Greek is from lines 415, 417, and 418.

PAGE 53:1. *Ibid.*, 433-81.

PAGE 54:30. *Ibid.*, 486-517; the quoted Greek is from lines 498 and 509.

PAGE 56:notes. Seneca, *Hippolytus*, 705-7, 714, 892.

PAGE 57:20. *Malmsbury*: A reference to Hobbes.

PAGE 57:35. Euripides, *Hippolytus*, 337, 339, 341.

PAGE 58:11. Seneca, *Hippolytus*, 114-15, 120, 142-3, 170, 174-7, 242, 245, 688-93, 1170-3.

PAGE 60:4. Sir William Petty (1623–87), projector and political economist, author of a survey and several other works on Ireland, and a founder of the Royal Society. Petty was a friend of Hobbes and of Aubrey, so it is probable that Rymer knew him; there is apparently some personal reference here.

PAGE 60:8. *The Maid's Tragedy* was also one of the first plays revived after the Restoration (Sprague, *Beaumont and Fletcher on the Restoration Stage*, p. 10), and held its popularity at least until the end of Charles II's reign. Pepys' first impression was that the play was "too sad and melancholy" (*Diary*, May 16, 1661), yet he saw it four more times before his diary ended in 1669. Langbaine (*An Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, p. 212) speaks of it as "a Play which has always been acted with great Applause at the King's Theatre." Its popularity faded, however, and in 1704 it is announced as "Not acted 12 years" (Sprague, p. 88). Downes (p. 5) gives as the cast:

King,	Mr. Wintersel.
Melantius,	Major Mohun.
Amintor,	Mr. Hart.
Calianax,	Mr. Shatterel.
Evadne,	Mrs. Marshal.
Aspatia,	Mrs. Boutel.

Rymer's quotations, less accurate than usual, are probably from the sixth quarto, 1650. The question of Waller's alterations can be outlined only briefly. Two separate revisions of the last act by Waller were printed by different publishers in 1689 and 1690, and Waller had planned still a third version in which only the king was left alive. In both extant versions decorum and the king's life are alike preserved. Evadne, leaving in the first version to become a Vestal, in the second a harlot, says,

*Amintor* lost, it were as vain a thing  
As 'tis prodigious, to destroy the King.

In both versions Lysippus refuses to join the conspiracy and challenges Melantius; the latter is brought back to loyalty by the mere appearance of the king. Poetic justice is more nearly approximated by bringing Amintor and Aspatia together. Throughout the revisions arguments are brought forward to raise the character and lessen the crime of the king:

Long may he reign, that is so far above  
All vice, all passion, but excess of love!

The publisher of the 1689 version states that these versions were made to please the court. Perhaps on no further evidence than this Langbaine, Gildon, and Theophilus Cibber all assumed that the play had been banned for a time. Resemblance between the king's private life and that of Charles II makes the supposition plausible, but there is no further evidence for it, and Rymer's silence on the point suggests that there was no ban before 1677. Waller's revisions may well have been made later than that date. They clearly try to mend what Rymer censured; since Rymer and Waller were almost certainly acquainted, Rymer's influence may have suggested the shape of the alterations. This cannot be proved, but the mere existence of these revisions shows that Rymer was not alone in his judgment. See Sprague, pp. 178-86, and P. A. Daniel in *The Works of Beaumont and Fletcher* (London, 1904), I, 6-7. A confirmation of Rymer's censure of the probability of the plot is given by Hazlitt:

The nature of the distress is of the most disagreeable and repulsive kind; and not the less so, because it is entirely improbable and uncalled-for. There is no sort of reason, or no sufficient reason to the reader's mind, why the king should marry off his mistress to one of his courtiers, why he should pitch upon the worthiest for this purpose, why he should, by such a choice, break off Amintor's match with the sister of another principal support of his throne (whose death is the consequence), why he should insist on the inviolable fidelity of his former mistress to him after she is married, and why her husband should thus inevitably be made acquainted with his dishonour, and roused to madness and revenge, except the mere love of mischief, and gratuitous delight in torturing the feelings of others, and tempting one's own fate. (*Works*, London, 1902, 5, 251.)

In general, the justice of some of Rymer's censures has been admitted, though grudgingly. Paul Elmer More, while stating that Rymer's "taste was vitiated by an insensibility to things beautiful in themselves," says that "one is bound to admit that his criticism of *The Maid's Tragedy* (not to say of *Othello*) finds the weak points of the play with diabolical shrewdness" (*Shelburne Essays, Tenth Series*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1919, p. 6). More recently Clifford Leech examines and supports Rymer's charges against probability in the play, and concludes, "Rymer is perhaps a little over-reluctant to admit Fletcher's skill in writing scenes for accomplished actors to exercise their craft in, but such intellectual puritanism is a fault in a relatively blameless direction"

(*Shakespeare's Tragedies*, New York, Oxford U. Press, 1950, p. 95).

PAGE 60:20. *Lysimachus*: Actually, the king's brother is called Lysippus.

PAGE 60:26. Spingarn suggests that Rymer is following Tassoni's criticism of *Orlando furioso* (*De' Pensieri diversi*, IX, iv). Jeremy Collier criticizes the title of *The Relapse* after Rymer's method (Spingarn, *Essays*, 3, 276-7), and Gildon that of *Julius Caesar* (Rowe, *Shakespeare*, 7, 377). See also above, p. 41, and La Mesnardière, pp. 46-7. Theobald comments:

Mr. *Rhymer* has very justly remark'd in his Criticisms on Tragedy, that as the *Moral* is a Lesson on the Dangers attending *Incontinence*, the Play ought to take its Name from the *King*: Whereas the whole Distress of the Story lying on *Aspatia* being abandon'd, and the gross Injury done to *Amintor*, the *Moral*, that we have, is in no kind to the Purpose. *Amintor* is every where, indeed, condemning himself for his Perfidy to his betroth'd Mistress; and inculcating, that the Heavens are strict in punishing him for that Crime; and so we have another *Moral* in the Body of the *Fable*. (*Works of Beaumont and Fletcher*, London, 1750, I, 89.)

PAGE 61:21. *Callianax* is literally καλλι-άναξ, a beautiful king.

PAGE 62:29. Euripides, *Hippolytus*, 377-8.

PAGE 62:33. Seneca, *Hippolytus*, 143-4.

PAGE 63:26. Theobald comments: "Mr. *Rymer* . . . not without Justice exclaims against the Effrontery and Impudence of *Evadne's* Character. But as the Colouring of his critical Reflections is generally so gross and glaring, I shall refer those Readers, who have Curiosity enough, to his Book, without quoting from him on this Subject" (I, 25).

PAGE 64:5. Spingarn points out that this idea occurs in Rapin, I, xxv: "The *Angelica* of *Ariosto* is too immodest. The *Armida* of *Tasso* is too free and impudent; these two Poets rob Women of their *Character*, which is Modesty." Rymer may also have been thinking of La Mesnardière's list: "Les Femmes sont dissimulées, douces, foibles, delicates, modestes, pudiques, courtoises, sublimes en leur pensées, soudaines en leurs desirs" (p. 123). See also Mambrun, *Dissertatio peripatetica de epico carmine* (Paris, 1652), p. 115. Dryden in the preface to *All for Love* perhaps echoes Rymer: "The French poets, I confess, are strict observers of these punctilios: they would not, for example, have suffered Cleopatra and Octavia to have met; or, if they had met, there must have only passed betwixt them some cold civilities,



but no eagerness of repartee, for fear of offending against the greatness of their characters, and the modesty of their sex" (*Essays*, I, 192).

PAGE 64:8. This bit of folklore is discussed by Sir Thomas Browne (*Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, IV, vi). The facts he regards as "popular affirmations, whereto we cannot assent"; the theory that woman's natural modesty is hereby shown he traces to Pliny.

PAGE 65:7. *Perillus's Bull*: The brazen bull of Phalaris, devised as a torture instrument for him by Perillus.

PAGE 65:14. *Aeneid*, II, 79–80.

PAGE 65:24. Contrast Rymer's earlier statement, p. 37.

PAGE 65:31. Clifford Leech comments: "So that if Macbeth had only been an Englishman, if Tamburlaine a Christian, their treatment of Duncan and Bajazet might have passed muster" (*Shakespeare's Tragedies*, p. 90).

PAGE 66:7. Euripides, *Medea*, 61.

PAGE 66:9. *Ibid.*, 83.

PAGE 67:1. Rymer has sharpened Aristotle (*Poetics*, XIV, 4) into a rule.

PAGE 67:4. *Mezentius: Aeneid*, X, 689–908.

PAGE 67:9. *Ibid.*, X, 870–2. Rymer reads *imo* for *uno*.

PAGE 67:15. *Gerusalemme conquistata*, XXIV, 98–101; the episode is not in the earlier *Gerusalemme liberata*. Solimano's son is named Altamoro.

PAGE 68:20. *and with the virgins weep*: Rymer had printed *for* and changed it to *with* in the errata; the correct reading is *see*.

PAGE 69:8. *Aeneid*, VI, 853.

PAGE 69:23. Horace, *Ars poetica*, 126–7.

PAGE 70:21. *Owf*: This spelling for *oaf*, not recorded in the *OED*, is probably a misprint.

PAGE 70:31. Cf. Dryden, *The Maiden Queen*, III, i: "So, there's another puff in my voyage, has blown me back to the north of Scotland."

PAGE 71:31. This is Rymer's only direct mention of Longinus. Probably no specific passage is referred to.

PAGE 72:1. The quarrel scene was frequently compared to that in *Iphigenia in Aulis* and that in *Julius Caesar*, as, for example, by Theobald in *The Censor*, 70 (1717). So Dryden in the preface to his reworking of *Troilus and Cressida* (1679) states that he borrowed his quarrel scene between Troilus and Hector from the scene in *Iphigenia in Aulis* rather than from the Brutus-Cassius quarrel "or the faulty copy of it in Amintor and Melantius." He analyzes the Euripides scene briefly, and adds, "But my friend Mr. Rymer has so largely, and with

so much judgment, described this scene . . . that it is superfluous to say more of it" (*Essays*, 1, 206). For John Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, the quarrel in *The Maid's Tragedy* was a proof that the friendship scenes of the last age were superior to the love scenes of his own: "And even for Softness it self, it will be hard to shew a Scene more moving than that between *Amyntor* and *Melantius* in the *Maid's-Tragedy*; which I should be sorry to see without great emotion, since 'tis a shrewd sign of being both dull and ill-natur'd" (*Works*, London, 1723, 1, 165). Later Theobald admitted that some had decried the scene "as egregiously faulty in the Motives and Progress; the Working up, and Declination of the Passions," but adds that the scene was always received with violent applause (*Works of Beaumont and Fletcher*, 1, 46-7). Modern opinion is less kind: "When the wronged Amintor reveals Evadne's guilt to her brother Melantius, they draw swords in turn and each in turn finds it impossible to defend himself against his friend: on the printed page the scene is as ridiculous as Rymer claims . . ." (Clifford Leech, *Shakespeare's Tragedies*, p. 95).

PAGE 73:8. *Harlequin and Scaramouctio*: The Italian commedia dell'arte was well known in England and very popular in court circles. An Italian troupe under Tiburio Fiborelli came several times to England during the 1670's. See Nicoll, *Restoration Drama* (Cambridge, 1923), pp. 238-40, and Boswell, *Restoration Court Stage* (Cambridge, Mass., 1932), pp. 118-25. It was probably with reference to these plays that Rymer later wrote, "All Europe over Plays have been represented with great applause, in a Tongue unknown, and sometimes without any language at all" (pp. 85-6). Ravenscroft's *Scaramouche . . . a Comedy after the Italian Manner* had been acted in May 1677.

PAGE 73:11. Rule and exception are from Aristotle, *Poetics*, XIV, 7-9: "But of all these ways, to be about to act knowing the persons, and then not to act, is the worst." Aristotle follows this with a discussion of the problem in *Iphigenia in Tauris*.

PAGE 73:28. Terence, *Eunuchus*, 63.

PAGE 74:30. For Hart, see note to p. 19:10. Major Michael Mohun (1620?-84) was a prominent character actor, usually playing second to Hart in the Theatre Royal. Downes states, "he was Eminent for *Volpone*; *Face* in the *Alchymist*; *Melantius* in the *Maids Tragedy*; *Mardonius*, in *King and no King*; *Cassius*, in *Julius Cæsar*; *Clytus*, in *Alexander*; *Mithridates*, &c. . . . in all his Parts, he was most Accurate and Correct" (p. 17). Of his playing with Hart, Steele recalls, "My old friends, Hart and Mohun, the one by his natural and proper force, the other by his great skill and art, never failed to send me home full

of such ideas as affected my behaviour, and made me insensibly more courteous and humane to my friends and acquaintance" (*Tatler*, 99).

PAGE 76:16. The idea that Horace's *Ars poetica* contains all of Aristotle's *Poetics* is of a piece with the belief that all the rules are in Aristotle. Rymer is echoing Rapin, I, xii.

PAGE 76:19. The reflections on *Paradise Lost* were not written, and we may be grateful. Still, Rymer, ignoring it in a discussion of the epic in 1674 and slighting it here, is not much at variance with the taste of his time. In 1692 Dryden was still on the defensive on this subject:

I will not take Mr. Rymer's work out of his hands. He has promised the world a critique on that author; wherein, though he will not allow his poem for heroic, I hope he will grant us, that his thoughts are elevated, his words sounding, and that no man has so happily copied the manner of Homer. . . . Neither will I justify Milton for his blank verse, though I may excuse him, by the example of Hannibal Caro, and other Italians, who have used it. (*Essays*, 2, 29.)

Part of Rymer's defense of rhyme is given in the preface to *Edgar*. One can probably assume that the criticism of *Paradise Lost*, like the last half of the critique on *Julius Caesar* and most of that on *Catiline*, was not written. But had it been, it would have been out of place in *A Short View*, dedicated to the Earl of Dorset, if one assumes any truth in the story that Dorset was one of the first to discover the poem.

PAGE 76:22. Selden's *Titles of Honour*, II, i, 43 (*Opera omnia*, London, 1726, 3, cols. 461-3), discusses the giving of a crown of laurel to poets and describes Petrarch's coronation. The account Rymer had was perhaps that by Buonconte Monaldeschi, first printed by Muratori, or more probably the forgery purporting to be by Sennucio del Bene which was already in print. See A. Hortis, *Scritti inediti di Francesco Petrarca* (Trieste, 1874), pp. 20-2, 37-42, and E. H. Wilkins, *The Making of the "Canzoniere" and Other Petrarchan Studies* (Rome, 1951), pp. 13, 61-6.

### Advertisement to *Edgar*

Wycherley and Dryden both knew of *Edgar* before the publication of *The Tragedies of the Last Age* and predicted accurately what its reception would be (above, pp. 193-4). Chronology thus does not support Pope's gibe: "witness the works of Mr. Rymer and Mr. Dennis, who beginning with criticism, became afterwards such Poets as no age hath parallel'd" (*Dunciad*, ed. Sutherland, London, 1943, p. 53).

Like *The Tragedies of the Last Age* the book was published by Richard Tonson, and likewise the title page was postdated 1678. Licensing date was September 13, 1677. Apparently the book did not sell, and the unsold copies were reissued by James Knapton as *The English Monarch: an Heroick Tragedy* in 1691. Nor did this exhaust the edition. Hoping to trade on the notoriety of *A Short View of Tragedy* Knapton again issued the book in 1693 under its original title, and stretched a point to call it "The Second Edition"; the *Term Catalogues* for Trinity 1693 furthered the deception by listing this as a reprint.

The play was never acted. It was published without prologue or epilogue, the place of the former being taken by a verse dedication to the king. Gildon later suggested that Rymer write the play of the Spanish Armada sketched in *A Short View*, adding, "I assure him, it shall not run the Fate of his *Edgar*, but be Acted" (*Miscellaneous Letters*, p. 75; see also Beaumont and Fletcher, *Works*, London, 1711, I, xxvi).

Langbaine in 1691 gently dismissed the play with the remark, "but I think for *Dramatick Poetry*, there are other Poets now alive, that at least equal that Tragedy which he has publisht," but added that it far exceeded Ravenscroft's *King Edgar and Alfrida* (*Some Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, pp. 433-4). Langbaine clearly stood in awe of Rymer the critic. Robert Gould did not. In *The Playhouse* he reproached Rymer for criticizing Fletcher, adding:

But he shou'd not have censur'd, or not writ:  
To blame good Plays, and make his own much worse,  
Though I shall spare him, does deserve a Curse.

(*Poems*, London, 1689, p. 178.)

After the publication of *A Short View* such mercy was out of place, and Dryden carried out Gould's threat:

To Shakespeare's critic, he bequeaths the curse  
To find his faults, and yet himself make worse;  
A precious reader in poetic schools,  
Who by his own examples damns his rules.

(Prologue to *Love Triumphant*, ll. 47-50.)

In 1694 Charles Gildon almost attempted a critique:

Some of my friends, whose Authority was very great with me, wou'd needs have me examine *Edgar*; but there were two things that obstructed my compliance with them—The First, That it was

so abominably stor'd with Opium, that I cou'd not possibly keep my Eyes open to read it attentively; The other, That 'twas such a Banter in it self on Poetry and sense, that all the pains I cou'd take about it, wou'd be only to give him the vanity of imagining it worth any Man's taking Notice of. (*Miscellaneous Letters*, p. 68.)

Two centuries later Professor Lounsbury showed more hardihood:

The student of the English drama, especially from the Restoration onward, has to wade through a mass of worthless works, but he will find none poorer in plot and wretched in execution than Rymer's 'Edgar.' It is not mediocre: it is mean. . . . the meanness of the matter is only exceeded by the meanness of the manner. . . . In truth, its sixty-three pages contain more execrable rymes and splayfoot verse—to use Pope's phrase—than any similar production in our literature written by an author of the least pretension whatsoever. (*Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist*, New York, Scribner's, 1901, p. 240.)

There is no need to multiply quotations, though we may note in passing John Dennis' idea that Rymer's play first gave rise to the idea that a good critic could not be a good poet (*Works*, 2, 209). The badness of the play, like that of D'Aubignac's *La Pucelle d'Orléans*, is legendary. Unfortunately it is a badness that produces not even perverse pleasure. But it does furnish an example of Rymer's early critical principles in practice, and its incompetence lays bare some inherent problems of heroic tragedy. Some description must be attempted.

The story of King Edgar and Elfreda first appears in William of Malmesbury and has had its most recent dramatic incarnation in Edna St. Vincent Millay's *The King's Henchman*. As William of Malmesbury tells the story Edgar, hearing of the beauty of Elfreda, sends his friend Ethelwold to find out whether she is worthy to be his queen. Ethelwold falls in love with her, sends back word that she is not sufficiently beautiful for a king, and marries her himself. Edgar, hearing that he has been cheated, pays Ethelwold a visit. Ethelwold, terrified, confesses to Elfreda and asks her to make herself as ugly as possible. Instead, she puts on her best adornments to meet Edgar. Edgar dissimulates his anger, but a little later on a hunting expedition he kills Ethelwold and afterward marries Elfreda (*De Gestis regum Anglorum*, ed. Stubbs, Rolls Series, 1887, 1, 178–9). Another version of the story is first found in the Norman chronicle of Geffrey Gaimar. In this version Edgar pays Ethelwold a surprise visit, so that Elfreda herself is in no way

guilty, and Ethelwold is killed by outlaws, possibly without Edgar's connivance (*Lestoire des Engles*, ed. Hardy and Martin, Rolls Series, 1888, pp. 151–68). This version also introduces the complication that Edgar had stood as godfather to Elfreda's child, so that the church protested Edgar's marriage to her. A complete discussion of the story occurs in Johanne M. Stochholm's edition of Massinger's *The Great Duke of Florence* (Baltimore, 1933); the origin of the legend is discussed by Edward Freeman, *Historical Essays* (London, 1872), 1, 15–25.

There were three English dramas on the subject before Rymer's: the anonymous *A Knack to Know a Knave* (1594), Massinger's *The Great Duke of Florence* (1627), and Edward Ravenscroft's *King Edgar and Alfrida* (1677). The first two were probably unknown to Rymer; the third was his immediate source. Ravenscroft's play was actually published after Rymer's despite its earlier title-page date: it is advertised in the *London Gazette*, October 29–November 1, 1677, and in the *Term Catalogues* for Hillary 1677/8. But (unless Ravenscroft's prologue lies outrageously) the printed text is a revision in blank verse of a rhymed play written some ten years before (see "Edward Ravenscroft's First Play," *PQ*, 28 [1949], 516). Into the plot Ravenscroft introduces Ruthwin, an ambitious lord, who helps Ethelwold marry Alfrida, with the twofold object of disgracing Ethelwold and making his daughter queen. When the play opens Edgar has just married Ruthwin's daughter and Ethelwold Alfrida. Edgar immediately discovers that he has been deceived, arrests Ethelwold, and to punish Ruthwin resolves never to live with his queen. Alfrida begs for Ethelwold's release; Edgar consents only on condition that she meet him in the garden after dark. Ruthwin hears of the rendezvous and tells Ethelwold; meanwhile Alfrida has asked the queen to be present. In the dark Edgar pleads with Alfrida, who rejects his advances. Edgar leaves for a moment, meaning to bring Ethelwold and show him this proof of Alfrida's constancy. Alfrida suggests to the queen that she take her place when Edgar returns, so that he may, in spite of his vow, consummate the marriage. Ethelwold comes, and Alfrida, thinking him Edgar, pretends to yield, then changes places with the queen. Ethelwold shoots the queen, then Alfrida's brother rushes on and kills Ethelwold. Ethelwold and the queen, both dying, forgive all, Ruthwin retires to a monastery, and the way is clear for Edgar's marriage to Alfrida.

It was this tragicomedy (for so Ravenscroft called it) that Rymer set in order. He combined the characters of Ruthwin and Ethelwold for greater tidiness, thus making Ethelwold the father of Ethelgede, the



queen. Otherwise Rymer's main plot follows Ravenscroft's almost exactly, save that he makes the denouement more tidy by having Ethelwold and the queen kill each other. Ethelwold clearly mistakes the queen for Alfrid, but why the queen kills Ethelwold—whether through mistaken identity, or to avenge her own death, or by premeditation—is not clear.

Since Rymer shows no aptitude for developing action, this plot by no means suffices, and he adds two parallel plots of his own invention. The more developed of these deals with the love of Editha, Edgar's sister, for a mysterious stranger who turns out to be Lewis IV of France, exiled because a usurper Rudolph (Raoul of Burgundy) possesses his kingdom. It is, strictly speaking, not a plot, and is artificially sustained for five acts by Editha's constant jealousy and her decorous determination to wed no one who is not a king *de facto* as well as *de jure*. All is resolved when the French summon Lewis home after the usurper's death. Even thinner is the other underplot, the story of King Kenneth of Scotland and the Danish princess Gunilda; here the only difficulty is that Gunilda loves first Edgar and then Lewis. These two plots do not touch on the main plot at any point.

Nor are these enough to fill out the play. Rymer adds a song, a scene in which eight kings row Edgar in a barge and then do homage, and a masque in which Proteus, Nereus, and Neptune sing praises of English sea power, in which Perseus rescues Andromeda, and three Sirens are put to flight by three Celestial Sirens. With all this embellishment the play is still shorter than average.

There is a fleeting political allegory. Edgar in his greatness is, by constant implication, identified with Charles II; Lewis of France at the same time suggests Charles II in exile, and the French usurper Rudolph is clearly Cromwell. Several incidental scenes are introduced only for political comment. The French ambassadors ask permission to build a navy and are refused:

*Edgar:* . . . your Reasons are no more,  
Then mine for building Castles on your Shoar.  
In my Dominions (nor th' Indulgence slight)  
I give you Leave to Traffick, not to Fight.  
I shall your Trade 'gainst Piracies ensure,  
If Forty hundred Sail the Seas can scour.

Dunstan, the Archbishop of Canterbury, enters in the last scene to forbid the marriage since Edgar had been Alfrid's godfather. He finds Edgar resembling Henry VIII:

*Edgar:* Is that a Law t' obtrude upon a King?  
Whence do's the pinching Obligation spring?  
'Tis not a Law in God's or Nature's Book.

*Dunstan:* On Rome, and on the Holy Canons look.  
These must command, where God and Nature's mute;  
And that Command no Temporall Prince dispute.  
Provoke not from the Holy Chair a Curse.

*Edgar:* If *Cæsar* liv'd, could I be threatned worse?  
I will that Curse in the mid Ocean meet,  
And 'gainst it try the fortune of a Fleet.

Dare you preach here what any Laws define,  
That are not shown under God's Hand or Mine?

*Lewis:* You bravely act, what others onely think,  
Who low beneath th' encroaching Deluge sink,  
O'rewhelm'd and damp't by Superstitious Fear;  
You'r truly King, and keep the Character.

From a critic who champions probability, decorum, and common sense, this is a strange play. Yet its defects are all inherent in the idea of the heroic play, and are here made apparent by Rymer's incompetent dramaturgy and his insistence on minor rules.

Plots of heroic tragedies were invariably from history, therein following the theory of the epic as well as satisfying the demand for probability; the playwrights were influenced by Aristotle's statement (*Poetics*, IX, 6) that what has happened is more probable and more readily believed. Yet the desire to raise admiration leads to strange history in Restoration tragedies: Solyman the Magnificent conquers Hungary, an Inca general becomes emperor of Mexico, and there are palace revolutions among the Sungs and the Moguls. When, rarely, the scene comes nearer home, the history remains unrecognizable: as an aftermath of the Battle of Poitiers King Edward, the Black Prince, and King John of France all fall in love with the same woman, and Anglo-French affairs are settled on that basis; the battles of Agincourt and Bosworth Field were both prompted by love rivalries. These plots point up the difficulty: English history was too familiar to allow insertion of the extravagant stories the heroic play demanded. Rymer, going further into the past, is staying closer to the practice of the epic, attempting in drama what he had censured Davenant for not doing in epic by adorning his own country. The subject then should extol the virtues of England and should present characters for emulation. While most playwrights would have agreed in theory, we find only four heroic tragedies

with an English setting before Rymer's: Orrery's *The Black Prince* and Henry V, Caryll's *The British Princess*, and Ravenscroft's *King Edgar and Alfrida*. The last can be excluded, for aside from a passing reference or two, it makes no use of its English setting. The others show the same easy chauvinism as Rymer's play and set the precedent for praise of the English navy and for the identification of the hero with Charles II.

The identification of Charles II with Edgar is meant, of course, as a compliment to the king and a statement of what the English monarchy should be; it does not descend to particulars any more than does the identification of Augustus with Aeneas. Decorum demanded an ideal king in tragedy, especially in a tragedy with such marked epic features, regardless of the shortcomings of an actual Edgar or an actual Charles II. Such a tragedy then can be a school for princes only to the extent of holding up an ideal for them to follow. To be sure, the court of Edgar is far more concerned with love than with anything else, but Rymer never criticizes Edgar's love or regards it as ignoble, even when it is about to take the form of adultery. A love plot is necessary, since strict ideas of decorum and epic greatness render any other sort of action impossible. Edgar's kingdom must be so strong that nothing can shake it; in compensation there are four revolutions in neighboring countries, but these are a poor substitute since Edgar can take care of them by issuing a few orders. A king can do no wrong: when, for example, Lewis is arrested the other characters at once suspect a villain, since " 'tis below a King to be unjust." The villain Ethelwold does start one bit of action by commandeering the guard against Edgar; but that quickly comes to naught since the mere appearance of the king is enough to subdue the rebel. Theory gives us a protagonist who is constantly praised by the other characters, but who has no way of showing his greatness and can scarcely be involved in any action. To this dilemma the love story is a solution—a poor one, certainly, but one which better playwrights than Rymer used for the same reasons.

Decorum still restricts the action hopelessly. Editha begins the play by announcing that since she is a princess there are only two men in the world whom considerations of rank would allow her to love and one of these is already married. Her entire part is built on such decorous reflections which serve little purpose other than to draw out the action and provide the usual love-honor debate. Whatever real action takes place must be due to the villains. That these actions must be ineffectual has already been shown; that the villains must be punished is demanded by poetic justice. Yet the same insistence on decorum makes it difficult for anyone to punish them, and Rymer's odd solution to the plot

has a mad logic to it, even though it does violate the "rule" that "in Poetry no woman is to kill a man."

By 1677 when the play was published taste was turning away from the extravagant language and the rhyme of heroic tragedy. Actually, Rymer probably wrote the play several years earlier. He clearly imitates *The Conquest of Granada* (acted 1671) in blocking out the opening scenes, refers directly to the heroes of that play, and patterns his poetic language on Dryden's as best he can. The emphasis on English sea power would be most suited to the period of the Dutch wars. But any date between 1672 and 1677 is possible.

Later, Rymer would certainly have repudiated some of the ideas that formed *Edgar*, particularly the emphasis on love and the extravagance of the language. Rymer's own unfortunate experience with the form may have helped lead him to the complete rejection of English tragedy and the demand for a return to Aeschylus.

PAGE 77:1. *Heroick Tragedy*: L. N. Chase (*The English Heroic Play*, New York, 1903, p. 3) notes that Rymer is the only playwright to use the phrase "heroic Tragedy" on his title page. Dryden's phrase is "heroic play," Langbaine's "A tragedy writ in heroic verse." But Chase's conclusion, that Rymer thinks only plays in rhyme can be called heroic tragedies, is very doubtful.

PAGE 77:2. Rymer had already argued that the epic poet should adorn the virtues of his own country (above, pp. 5-6), and naturally carries this over into tragedy. In *A Short View* he was to suggest patriotic subjects and outline a play based on one (above, pp. 90-1).

PAGE 77:3. Rymer subscribes to Dryden's idea that "an heroic play ought to be an imitation, in little, of an heroic poem" (*Essays*, I, 150). The idea rests ultimately on Aristotle, *Poetics*, V, 4, and XXIII, 1. Rymer's treatment of his central character owes much to Aeneas, and the idea of the epic hero derived from him.

PAGE 77:5. Aristotle places tragedies of this sort in the second rank (*Poetics*, XIII, 7); yet most heroic tragedies were necessarily of this sort, and Rymer's ideas of royal decorum and poetic justice would have compelled a happy ending even if his patriotism had not.

PAGE 77:10. The controversy over rhyme, dormant since the Dryden-Howard argument in 1668, was being revived. Dryden had attacked rhyme in the prologue to *Aureng Zebe* (acted 1675); his blank-verse *All for Love* was shortly to be acted (December 12, 1677). Ravenscroft's blank-verse version of *King Edgar and Alfrida* with a prologue sharply attacking rhyme was somewhat earlier. Rymer's appeal to the

authority of Cowley, Denham, and Waller was perhaps prompted by Milton's defense of blank verse, first attached to the second edition of *Paradise Lost* in 1674. Though *Edgar* itself was probably written earlier, this "Advertisement" probably belongs to 1677 and reflects the controversy at that date. In *A Short View* (p. 118) Rymer was, like Dryden before him, to reverse his position.

PAGE 77:11. The chief point in the Dryden-Howard controversy had been whether rhyme was natural; by using different meanings of the word each proved his case. Howard had used "natural" in the sense of an imitation of empirical reality and freedom from deliberate design (see A. O. Lovejoy, "'Nature' as Aesthetic Norm," in his *Essays in the History of Ideas*, Baltimore, 1948, pp. 69-77, meanings 1 and 15). In this sense Rymer uses "unnaturall" in line 11; "unnaturall" in line 13 implies the idea of uniformity and neoclassical concepts of generalized nature (Lovejoy, meanings 2, 3, 4, 7, 10) while "Nature" in the same sentence is again empirical reality (meaning 1). Howard had argued that rhyme in plays is unnatural because it does not imitate that nature—people speaking extempore—that a play presents; Rymer answers by arguing that English is less natural than rhyme because less universal. He is enjoying his logical paradox and presumably the argument is not to be taken too seriously. The defense does avoid Dryden's conclusion that "heroic rhyme is nearest Nature, as being the noblest kind of modern verse" (*Essays*, 1, 101; for Howard's answer see Spingarn, *Essays*, 2, 107).

PAGE 77:14. "Sweet," for Rymer, is apt to be a term of reproach (e.g. p. 4). This argument was more prominent in the Italian than in the English controversy, as in Speroni, *Lectioni in defesa della Canace*, ch. IV (*Canace Tragedia*, Venice, 1597).

PAGE 77:20. *late Epitomizers*: The version of the Edgar story from William of Malmesbury, in which Edgar kills Ethelwold on a hunting expedition, is followed by Holinshed, Stow, Speed, Baker, and Milton. Rymer perhaps considered the other version, first found in Gaimar, more authentic, though for his play he takes only the intervention of Dunstan from it. In both other literary handlings of the story at this time Edgar was exonerated: in Ravenscroft's play Ethelwold is killed by Alfrida's brother, and in a prose version in *The Annals of Love* (London, 1672) he dies of melancholy.

## The Rochester Preface

This edition of Rochester's poems was published by Jacob Tonson in 1691, with no editor's name and an unsigned preface. Tonson did



enter the book in the Stationers' Register, December 5, 1690, but apparently did not advertise. The work was reprinted in 1696, 1705, 1710, 1714, and 1732. The 1714 edition was the first to identify the preface as by Thomas Rymer; the ascription, highly plausible on grounds of style and critical method, has never been questioned and need not be. But Rymer's share in the volume beyond the preface is open to doubt. The earlier edition of *Rochester*, in ten reprintings, bore the patently bogus imprint Antwerpen or Antwerp and contained undoubtedly apocryphal work; consequently the tendency has been to regard this 1691 edition, from a reputable publisher and with a preface by Rymer, as more authoritative. Here only a few points can be noted. The text of the 1691 edition is an independent effort, though in general its readings are inferior to those of the Antwerpen editions; its greatest virtue seems to lie in printing fewer spurious items, and its greatest weakness is bowdlerization—not merely in omissions but in actual changes in the texts. Even a supposition that Rymer edited the volume would not help much with the textual problem; though Rymer writes as an admirer of Rochester's work, he was not likely to have been intimate with Rochester or his associates. And Rymer's own statement, "The *Publisher* assures us, he has been diligent out of Measure . . ." is an apparent disclaimer of editorial responsibility. James Thorpe's edition of Rochester's *Poems on Several Occasions* (Princeton, 1950, pp. xxxii–xxxvii) discusses the problem fully.

As criticism, Rymer's preface is gracious rather than profound, and is marked by the good sense he praises. There is no attempt, as in Robert Wolseley's earlier preface to *Valentinian*, to justify Rochester's libertine position. Indeed, Rymer gives away this part of his case, merely making the usual excuses about the debauchery of Charles II's court, lack of a critical discipline, and the ordinary license of youth. Rymer's criticism of Rochester stresses his natural genius (his wit, the flights of imagination) while admitting an inadequacy of judgment (maturity and cool reflection)—an argument very similar to that used by neoclassical defenders of Shakespeare. Otherwise praise is meted out much as in the Rapin preface, by setting Rochester, in certain passages, above Ovid, Anacreon, and Boileau, and again there is emphasis on condensation and precision of statement.

PAGE 78:1. The beginning of the Rapin preface states a similar view of the function of criticism.

PAGE 78:14. Gilbert Burnet (1643–1715), later Bishop of Salisbury, having received royal permission, brought the dying Rochester to re-



penitance. His report, *Some Account of the Life and Death of John, Earl of Rochester, Who Died July 26, 1680, Written by His Own Direction on His Death-bed* (1680), was almost as popular as Rochester's poems.

PAGE 78:16. *Curiosa felicitas*: This stock epithet was first applied to Horace by Petronius (*Satyricon*, CXVIII).

PAGE 79:7. Rochester had translated, more or less freely, Ovid, *Amores*, II, 9; Lucretius, II, 646–51; and the final part of the chorus to Act II of Seneca's *Troas*, ll. 397–408 (*Works*, ed. Hayward, London, 1926, pp. 47–8, 43, 48–9).

PAGE 79:9. *the Cup*: Rymer's marginal reference is to Rochester's verses beginning,

*Vulcan, contrive me such a Cup  
As Nestor us'd of old. (Ibid., p. 21.)*

While indirectly from Anacreon, *Odes*, XVII and XVIII, the lines are a translation of Ronsard's poem beginning,

Vulcan! En faveur de moy  
Je te pri, depesche toy  
De me tourner une tasse  
Qui de profondeur surpasse  
Celle du vieillard Nestor.

Rochester shows the same firmness and brilliance in adapting here as in *A Satyr against Mankind*.

PAGE 79:21. The opening lines of Boileau's eighth satire, written in 1667 and dedicated ironically to Dr. Claude Morel, translated by John Oldham (1653–83), are matched against the opening lines of Rochester's *A Satyr against Mankind*.

PAGE 80:28–30. Ezra Pound (*ABC of Reading*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1934, p. 133) quotes this passage and adds, "I cite this preface to show that intelligent criticism is not my personal invention. God's apes like B. d S., X.Z.Q.K., etc., hadn't the excuse of there not having been a decent English criticism or enlightened modes of estimation for them to learn from." Pound used the 1696 edition in which the preface is unsigned.

PAGE 81:11. All editions except the first read this sentence as "No Imitation cou'd bound or prescribe whither his Flight should carry him." The reading is interesting but inferior and probably results from a double misprint.

PAGE 81:15. *Monkey*: Not specifically identified by Rymer but probably

a reference to the monkey in *A Letter from Artemisia*. For the monkey theme in Rochester see J. H. Wilson, *The Court Wits of the Restoration*, p. 136.

PAGE 81:16. *Gondibert*: The name is Rymer's, not Rochester's, and refers (as the marginal reference shows) to a stanza in *The Maim'd Debauchee*, a poem in the heroic quatrains of Davenant's *Gondibert*:

I'll tell of Whores attack'd their Lords at home,  
Bawds quarters beaten up, and Fortress won;  
Windows demolish'd, Watches overcome,  
And handsome Ills by my contrivance done.

(*Works*, ed. Hayward, pp. 41-2.)

### *A Short View of Tragedy*

Rymer's last critical work appeared in time to be advertised in the *Athenian Mercury* for January 10, 1692/3. One cannot say exactly how long before this date it appeared; it was reviewed in both the *Gentleman's Journal* and the *Compleat Library* for December 1692, but these journals tended to fall behind date. The phrase "Servant to their Majesties" on the title page probably refers to Rymer's post as historiographer royal, thus making December 8, 1692, the earliest possible date for setting the title page. The work had been announced some time earlier in the *Gentleman's Journal*: "Mr. Rhymer will shortly oblige the World with some more of his nice and judicious Criticisms on some of our Dramatick Writings; This is a Piece of News which will doubtless please you extremely" (October 1692, p. 17).

The review by Motteux in the *Gentleman's Journal* is noncommittal. It gives a brief synopsis, mentioning Rymer's severity, and avoids judgment by saying:

The Ingenious are somewhat divided about some Remarks in it, though they concur with Mr. Rhymer in many things, and generally acknowledge that he discovers a great deal of Learning through the whole. For these Reasons I must forbear saying any more of it, and refer you to the Book it self; well remembring what *Quintilian* tells us, *Modestè tamen & circumspecto judicio de tantis viris pronuntiandum est, ne quod plerisque accidit, damnent quæ non intelligunt*. (December 1692, p. 15.)

The possible double reference of the quotation leaves little doubt as to Motteux's sentiments. But more than a year later, when reviewing Gil-

don's *Miscellaneous Letters*, he is still civil: "Mr. Rymer has a little too violently inforc'd the Errors of this excellent Poet [Shakespeare], and levell'd him with the most despicable Poetasters" (*Gentleman's Journal*, April 1694, p. 82 [for p. 99]). The other review, in the *Compleat Library* for December 1692, is a mere synopsis.

Dryden, obliquely attacked in the book, evaded formal answer, though his next critical work, *Examen poeticum* (August 1693), makes constant reference to Rymer's critical position and hints at a personal defense:

I think I shall be able to defend myself, when I am openly attacked; and to show, besides, that the Greek writers only gave us the rudiments of a stage which they never finished; that many of the tragedies in the former age amongst us were without comparison beyond those of Sophocles and Euripides. But at present I have neither the leisure, nor the means, for such an undertaking. 'Tis ill going to law for an estate, with him who is in possession of it, and enjoys the present profits, to feed his cause. But the *quantum mutatus* may be remembered in due time. In the meanwhile, I leave the world to judge, who gave the provocation. (*Essays*, 2, 5-6.)

This of course is reaction to a personal attack, and Dryden described it not unfairly in a personal letter shortly thereafter: "[Rymer] has spoken slightly of me in his last Critique; & that gave me occasion to snarl againe" (*Letters*, ed. C. E. Ward, Durham, N.C., 1942, p. 59). Other comments in the *Examen poeticum* are not meant to apply merely to Rymer, but from "Ill writers are usually the sharpest censors" at the beginning, through critics "who manifestly aim at the destruction of our poetical church and state; who allow nothing to their countrymen, either of this or of the former age," there is a constant counterattack against Rymer's ideas. A later letter to Dennis gives Dryden's more considered view:

. . . I cannot but conclude with Mr. Rym[er], that our English Comedy is far beyond anything of the Ancients. And notwithstanding our irregularities, so is our Tragedy. Shakespear had a Genius for it; and we know, in spite of Mr. R—— that Genius alone is a greater Virtue (if I may so call it) than all other Qualifications put together. You see what success this Learned Critick has found in the World, after his Blaspheming Shakespear. Almost all the Faults which he has discover'd are truly there; yet who will read Mr. Rym—— or not read Shakespear? For my own part I reverence

Mr. Rym——s Learning, but I detest his Ill Nature and his Arrogance. (*Letters*, pp. 71–2.)

These reactions of Dryden's, not all intended for publication, show clearly the direction that critical opinion was taking. Rymer is seen as a champion of the ancients against the moderns; his learning is impressive and is grudgingly admired; to attack Shakespeare is blasphemous.

Though Dryden avoided formal rejoinder, there were two attempts to answer Rymer. The first, John Dennis' *The Impartial Critick*, must have been prepared in some haste, for it was already advertised in the *London Gazette* for February 23–27, 1692/3. Dennis' answer is by no means complete, nor is it an attack on Rymer's central position. Its urbanity and good sense are perhaps as effective an answer to Rymer as the argument itself. Dennis was a friend of Dryden's, and it has been suggested that he used material given him by Dryden (Hooker's note in Dennis, *Works*, 1, 434). Dennis is not concerned with mere rebuttal or personal abuse; in fact, he approves of Rymer's general position: "I am for observing the Rules of *Aristotle* as much as any Man living, as far as it can be done without re-establishing the Ancient Method" (*Works*, 1, 30). He condemns Rymer's style as improper for criticism; he upholds love in tragedy and praises Shakespeare. But most of the essay is taken up with objections to the introduction of the chorus, and here Rymer is all but forgotten while Dacier's more potent arguments are being answered.

Dennis had promised a second part, dealing with Shakespeare, but the promised volume did not appear. A year later his friend Charles Gildon published a more complete, if more superficial, answer in *Miscellaneous Letters and Essays* (1694). Two of the letters are specifically directed against Rymer: "Some Reflections on Mr. Rymer's Short View of Tragedy, and an Attempt at a Vindication of Shakespear, in an Essay Directed to John Dryden, Esq"; and "An Essay at a Vindication of Love in Tragedies, Against Rapin and Mr. Rymer. Directed to Mr. Dennis." These essays, especially the former, are the most extreme revolt against neoclassical criticism that the 17th century produced. Gildon rejects the authority of Aristotle, arguing that his rules were derived from Greek drama and have nothing to do with England; he points out the advances we have made in physics and philosophy by rejecting Aristotle (p. 87). He rejects the rules, arguing that a great genius cannot bear their confinement and that the French bear them only because they lack genius. Greatness glories in a noble

irregularity; Virgil, Sophocles, and Dryden are great though regular, but they are exceptions (pp. 91–2). Gildon follows Dryden in arguing that the English have already surpassed the Greeks in tragedy (p. 87). But the position is more extreme than Gildon can maintain, and the old apparatus appears again. The end of poetry is still to profit and delight, and Shakespeare has attained that end (p. 92). Rymer should have distinguished the faults of Shakespeare from those of his age; to please a ruder time he had to mix tragedy and comedy and put in speeches that were out of character. And Shakespeare did not know Aristotle, so he can be excused for having failed to observe the unities, though this is admittedly a blemish (pp. 88–90). Gildon says nothing to defend the time scheme in *Othello*, and on the whole his examination of Rymer's work shows more ingenious quibbling than sound method. It is not surprising that some years later he regards *Othello*, and Rymer, differently: "I have drawn the Fable with as much favour to the Author, as I possibly cou'd, yet I must own that the Faults found in it by Mr Rymer are but too visible for the most Part" (Rowe, *Shakespeare*, 7, 410).

Other answers to Rymer, insofar as they are answers and not abuse, center around the *Othello* critique. For example, Sedley in 1693:

In every Age there were a sort of Men,  
 As you do now, damn'd all was written then.  
 Thousands before 'em less provok'd their Pride  
 Then one poor rivall straining by their side,  
 Such vermin Critticks we expect to find,  
 For Nature knows not how to loose a kind  
 The stinking Poll Cat, nor the Mole that's Blind. }  
 But against old as well as new to rage,  
 Is the peculiar Phrensy of this Age.  
*Shackspear* must down, and you must praise no more  
 Soft *Desdemona*, nor the Jealous *Moor*:  
*Shackspear* whose fruitfull Genius, happy Wit  
 Was fram'd and finisht at a lucky hit  
 The Pride of Nature, and the shame of Schools,  
 Born to Create, and not to learn from Rules;  
 Must please no more, his Bastards now deride  
 Their Fathers Nakedness they ought to hide.

(*Works*, ed. De Sola Pinto, London, 1928, 1, 50.)

The same idea of paternal reverence occurs in Oldmixon: "If Mr. Rimer had thus consider'd his Duty to *Shackspear*, as he was the

Father of our Stage, he would have sav'd himself and the World a great deal of Trouble and Scandal" (*Poems on Several Occasions*, London, 1696, preface).

References to Rymer's work are most frequent in writers on Shakespeare. Rowe felt obliged to notice the attack in his edition: "I must confess, I can't very well see what could be the Reason of his animadverting with so much Sharpness, upon the Faults of a Man Excellent on most Occasions, and whom all the World ever was and will be inclin'd to have an Esteem and Veneration for" (Rowe, *Shakespeare*, 1, xv). He goes on to question whether Rymer's sketch for a tragedy would not show as many faults as Shakespeare, makes the customary reference to *Edgar*, and notes that Rymer has failed utterly in his intention to ruin Shakespeare's reputation. However, "he has certainly pointed out some Faults very judiciously; and indeed they are such as most People will agree, with him, to be Faults. But I wish he would likewise have observ'd some of the Beauties too" (*ibid.*, pp. xxxiv-xxxv).

The 37th *Guardian* is devoted to an essay by John Hughes in defense of *Othello*. Rymer's name is not mentioned, but it is obviously his attack that prompted the essay. Hughes admits that the play is irregular and that economy of fable and probability are sometimes neglected. This is followed by the usual argument that beauties outweigh faults; the beauties already are regarded as beyond the reach of reason: "It would be easy for a tasteless critic to turn any of the beauties I have mentioned into ridicule; but such an one would only betray a mechanical judgment, formed out of borrowed rules and commonplace reading, and not arising from any true discernment in human nature, and its passions."

Shakespeare's next editor, Pope, had read Rymer but made no attempt at direct answer. Theobald, however, did: "It seems a moot Point, whether Mr. *Pope* has done most injury to *Shakespeare* as his Editor and Encomiast; or Mr. *Rymer* done him service as his Rival and Censurer" (*Shakespeare's Works*, London, 1733, 1, xxxv). Theobald insisted that Rymer was not to be taken seriously and that his raillery provoked amusement rather than anger (*ibid.*, 1, xlvii; 7, 371-2). A glance at Theobald's notes shows, however, that he took some of Rymer's criticisms seriously enough to attempt refutation.

That reactions centered so much on the chapter on *Othello* has been unfortunate, but it is a misfortune for which Rymer's chaotic organization is responsible. At first glance *A Short View* is a confusion of remarks on classical drama, Christian opposition to the stage, Provençal



poetry, antiquarian lore, and vituperation against Shakespeare. The parts are disproportionate, and Rymer has little control over the direction in which his miscellaneous knowledge will take him. The book was apparently produced in some haste: the criticisms of *Othello*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Catiline* had been promised in *Tragedies of the Last Age*, fifteen years before, and do not fit easily into Rymer's later plan. That of *Othello* is extensive—almost half the book—while that of *Julius Caesar* is limited to a few scenes, and for *Catiline* there are only generalities. These were possibly drafted years earlier and were hastily finished to fulfill a promise. If so, they received some later revision: approval of *The Rehearsal* and the attack on extravagant language show a change in Rymer's tastes if not in his basic theory. Perhaps other sections of the book were written separately also and only afterward fitted into the final scheme. That scheme is clearly stated in the title as a view of the beginning of tragedy, its perfection, and its subsequent decay—a literary history on the standard biological analogy of a cycle of birth, flowering, and decay. The nominal subject is tragedy, but this Rymer easily extends to poetry in general, partly to cover gaps in his knowledge of dramatic history, partly under the mistaken impression that Provençal poets wrote comedies and tragedies. The thesis is the comparison of the cycle of poetry in antiquity with that in modern times, to show that the potentialities of England are as great as those of the classical world but that the English cycle needs correction and reform according to classical models. The body of the book might be outlined as follows:

Chapter I. Introduction: lack of taste in modern audiences and lack of knowledge in playwrights; the program for reform.

Chapter II. The development and dignity of tragedy among the Greeks, and its decline under the Romans.

Chapter III. Early Christian attacks on the stage as responsible for this decline, and the continuance of these attacks to the present.

Chapter IV. General answers to the Christian attacks.

Chapter V. General state of tragedy in Italy, France, Spain, and England.

Chapter VI. Development of poetry and drama in England.

Chapter VII. *Othello* as an illustration of the weakness of English tragedy.

Chapter VIII. *Julius Caesar* and *Catiline* as further illustrations. Further plans for reform.

Such an outline conceals, of course, the disproportion of parts and the easy way in which Rymer passes over parts of his outline about which

he knows nothing—Spanish drama, for example. The misnumbering of chapters VI and VII and the incomplete table of contents to chapter VII may be further evidence of hasty assembly.

It is unkind to point out that the one aspect of the book that has received uniform praise—Rymer's learning—does not fare well in this edition. The wide range of quotations from the Church Fathers comes from Joseph de Voisin's obscure antistage tract; the quotations from medieval literature in manuscript are citations from Du Cange's Latin dictionary; the knowledge of Provençal is largely taken from Jean de Nostredame, whose work Rymer did not even know in its French original. Minor indebtednesses are sometimes scrupulously acknowledged, but Rymer is apt to use footnotes to conceal more than to reveal his real sources; greater scholars have perhaps done the same. There still remains much to show Rymer as a well-read antiquarian with a random collection of quotations and information, but nothing to indicate a systematic student of either literature or criticism. *A Short View* remains one of the first attempts to write a history of literature organized to support a thesis. In that respect it is more significant than earlier commentators have realized; it is also more pretentious and imperfect.

PAGE 82. On the title page Rymer quotes Horace's reference to the old Saturnian poetry (*Epistolae*, II, i, 160): "Hodieque manent vestigia ruris."

PAGE 82:1. Charles Sackville, sixth Earl of Dorset and fourth Earl of Middlesex (1638–1706), was the most prominent patron of the period. Though generally allied to Whig interests he received dedications from writers of all factions. In his own right a poet of some ability, he was also the great-grandson of Thomas, first Earl of Dorset, part author of *Gorboduc*—a fact worth noting in estimating Rymer's praise of that play. Dorset appeared as Eugenius in Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*. Rymer's comment that Dorset's countenance had supported his case against the prejudice then reigning (p. 83) implies acquaintance and common interest; Rymer's volume of occasional verse contains several poems that show familiar acquaintance with Dorset and his circle. See Brice Harris, *Charles Sackville* (Urbana, Ill., 1940), pp. 162–3 and *passim*. With respect to the dedication of *A Short View* Gildon suggests that Dorset's "generous Patronage of all that have any Merit in the Republic of Letters, ought to have secur'd him from such a Prophanation" (*Miscellaneous Letters*, p. 69).

PAGE 82:12. Choerilus accompanied Alexander on his campaigns, and

according to legend Alexander would have preferred to be the Thersites of Homer rather than the Achilles of Choerilus; nevertheless,

Gratus Alexandro regi magno fuit ille  
Choerilus, incultis qui versibus et male natis  
Rettulit acceptos, regale nomisma, Philippos.

(Horace, *Epistolae*, II, i, 232-4.)

PAGE 82:17. Quintilian, X, i, 91. The reference is to Germanicus Augustus, i.e. Domitian.

PAGE 83:3. Armand de Bourbon, Prince of Conti (1629-66), was the author of an antistage tract which appeared shortly after his death. The small volume cannot compare in effectiveness with the later attack of Jeremy Collier, though it called forth D'Aubignac's *Dissertation sur la condamnation des théâtres*, which in turn occasioned Joseph de Voisin's *La Défense du traité de Monseigneur le Prince de Conti* (1671), an appeal to authority taking more than 500 quarto pages. Rymer may not wish to raise Conti's ghost, but he uses him and De Voisin liberally in chapters III and IV of the present work.

PAGE 83:4. Rymer is recalling slightly out of context the opening of De Voisin's dedication: "Monseigneur, Je presente à Vostre Altesse la défense de la Vertu, contre les spectacles du Theatre."

PAGE 83:11. René le Bossu, Abbé de St-Jean-de-Chartres (1631-80), is best known for his *Traité du poëme épique* (1675), translated into English in 1695. Boileau's verdict, "L'un des meilleurs livres de poétique qui aient été faits en nostre langue," was accepted in both France and England. Rymer owes relatively little to him, but since Le Bossu was the best known of the formalist critics in England the charge that Rymer plagiarized from him was frequently made.

PAGE 83:11. André Dacier (1657-1722) was an eminent classical scholar, later secretary to the French Academy. His translation and commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics* appeared in March 1692; its narrow logic connects it most closely with the much earlier works of La Mesnardière and D'Aubignac. Rymer draws heavily on Dacier's commentary, especially in the opening chapters of *A Short View*.

PAGE 83:12. With very few exceptions French 17th-century critics placed the epic above tragedy; see Bray, *La Formation de la doctrine classique* (Paris, 1927), p. 337, and R. A. Sayce, *The French Biblical Epic* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 6-7. Rymer might have taken his statement about Plato from *Laws*, II, 658-9, or from Dacier, p. 483. Le Bossu's attitude is misrepresented; though he writes only about epic, he care-

fully avoids any decision (I, ii). Aristotle's statement is in *Poetics*, XXVI, and Dacier concurs (pp. 496-7).

PAGE 83:17. *others of a Modern Cut*: A hit at the *Oedipus* of Dryden and Lee (1679). Dennis in *The Impartial Critick* (*Works*, I, 18-22) takes up this accusation and, while admiring the English *Oedipus*, is inclined to agree with Rymer. The Latin ejaculation is *Aeneid*, II, 274. PAGE 84. In the original edition the dedication is followed by an analytic table of contents, here omitted since these outlines also appear at the head of each chapter. That for chapter VII is incomplete here also.

PAGE 84:16. In earlier French tragedy the chorus had been common, but was gradually dropped during Hardy's time. In Italian drama it was usual. Racine in his last two plays, *Esther* (1689) and *Athalie* (1691), reintroduced it, and was imitated by Claude Boyer in his *Jephté*. Racine's plays, as Dennis was quick to point out (*Works*, I, 31), were a special case, since Racine was writing not for the French stage but for an academy of young ladies at St. Cyr. Racine did not generalize from his practice, merely pointing out that in a religious play it was advantageous "d'employer à chanter les louanges du vrai Dieu cette partie du chœur que les païens employoient à chanter les louanges de leurs fausses divinités" (Preface to *Esther*, *Œuvres*, Paris, 1865-73, 3, 455).

PAGE 84:20. Rymer's real argument is that the chorus must be retained, not necessarily because it was original but because it was found in the best of tragedies (p. 94). Otherwise he falls easy victim to Gildon's argument: "Now, if the *Chorus* be necessary, because 'twas the Original of *Tragedy*, 'tis equally necessary the *Chorus* shou'd celebrate the Praise of *Bacchus*, as it originally did" (*Miscellaneous Letters*, p. 77). Dacier's arguments are more extreme than Rymer's: since tragedy represents a public action it is not possible for it to pass without many people observing it, whose fortunes are also concerned, and therefore the chorus is necessary for verisimilitude. It has been wanting in French tragedy, where much happens in the private apartments of kings which the chorus cannot enter. But since the spectators can no more come into such a place than the chorus can, the place should be changed and the chorus reintroduced. In that way tragedy will again be restored to its first luster. Further, the chorus is necessary to keep the action continuous, for without it we have no assurance that the actors will come back to finish the play (pp. 312 ff.; see also pp. xv-xvi). Dennis devotes the last two dialogues of *The Impartial Critick*

to an attack on the chorus, but is much more concerned with Dacier's arguments than with Rymer's. To Rymer he merely points out that the chorus is no longer essential and that the end of tragedy can be obtained perhaps even better without it (*Works*, I, 30 ff.).

PAGE 84:22. The same argument was used by D'Aubignac (II, iv) and by Dacier (p. 312). The answer was obvious: Dennis immediately pointed out that in *Esther* Racine took more than usual liberty with place, and that in both his choral plays the action is not continuous (*Works*, I, 32). Gildon went further, using the *Suppliants* of Euripides to show that the chorus was no safeguard to the unities (*Miscellaneous Letters*, p. 69). Rymer himself admits the failure of the chorus in *Catiline* to hold the poet to verisimilitude (p. 171).

PAGE 85:1. Aristotle, *Poetics*, XIV, 1-3; XV, 9.

PAGE 85:2. The first of Rymer's numerous references to this famous satire on heroic tragedy, the work partly of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, and aimed in its final form at Dryden. Rymer had in mind passages like "*Bayes*: Now, Sir, I gad, this is the bane of all us Writers: let us soar never so little above the common pitch, I gad, and all's spoil'd; and for the vulgar never uderestand us, they can never conceive you, Sir, the excellencie of these things" (III, i); and "The Town! why, what care I for the Town? I gad, the Town has us'd me as scurvily, as the Players have done. . . . Since they will not admit of my Plays, they shall know what a Satyrist I am" (V).

PAGE 85:12. Horace, *Epistolae*, II, i, 206-7. In Rymer's translation Mamamouchi comes from the title conferred on M. Jourdain in Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, IV, v; Rymer could have taken the word from Ravenscroft's adaptation, *Mamamouchi, or the Citizen Turn'd Gentleman*.

PAGE 85:18. The Venetian Senate and the Blackamoor Ruffian are of course references to *Othello*. For Tom Dove, London's most famous bear since Ned of Canterbury, see Dryden's "Epilogue to the King and Queen at the Opening of their Theatre," ll. 22-3, and Summers, *Restoration Theatre* (London, 1934), p. 28.

PAGE 85:27. *The Rehearsal*, Act V.

PAGE 85:35. The same argument is restated later, p. 149.

PAGE 86:29. Πολιτικός: Aristotle, *Poetics*, VI, 16. Dacier comments: "Le Grec dit, *Tout ce qui est du discours, est l'ouvrage de la Politique & de la Rhetorique*. Aristote appelle *Politique*, l'usage commun, le langage ordinaire des peuples, qui parlent toujours simplement & sans art, au lieu que la Rhetorique enseigne à parler avec art & avec methode, & à orner ses pensées de toutes les graces du discours recherché" (p.

96). Castelvetro had translated the word *secondo la cittadinesca* (*Poetica*, Basel, 1576, p. 134). Rymer, like Dacier, uses this passage in Aristotle to attack imagery, and would have approved of Ascham's much earlier use of the same passage: "He that wyll wryte well in any tongue, muste folowe thys councel of Aristotle, to speake as the common people do, to thinke as wise men do; and so shoulde euery man vnderstande hym, and the iudgement of wyse men alowe hym. Many English writers haue not done so, but vsinge straunge wordes as latin, french and Italian, do make all thinges darke and harde" (*Toxophilus*, ed. Arber, London, 1868, p. 18).

PAGE 86:33. *The Rehearsal*, II, iv.

PAGE 87:9. This point is also stressed by Dacier, p. 326. Gildon argues that pronunciation, far from concealing blunders, would make them more obvious (*Miscellaneous Letters*, p. 70).

PAGE 87:11. "Upon the Earl of Roscommon's Translation of Horace," ll. 27–8, in Waller, *Poems*, ed. Thorn-Drury (London, 1893), p. 215.

PAGE 87:13. A conflation of two stories: the first part is from the account of Demosthenes (VII) in the *Lives*, whence it was quoted by De Voisin, pp. 281–2; the second is the anecdote in *Lives of the Ten Orators* (845, B) in which Demosthenes gives *ὑπόκρισις* ("action" or "delivery") as the first three parts of oratory.

PAGE 87:35. Probably Horace, *Epistolae*, II, i, 183–6:

. . . numero plures, virtute et honore minores  
Indocti stolidique . . . inter carmina poscunt  
Aut ursum aut pugiles.

PAGE 88:2. Plutarch, *Cimon*, VIII.

PAGE 88:8. Pellisson, *Histoire de l'Académie Française*, ed. Livet (Paris, 1858), pp. 86–90. The proverb is there given as "Cela est beau comme le Cid."

PAGE 88:12. Gabriel Guéret (1641–88), French lawyer and satirist, in 1668 published his vision of affairs on Parnassus. In it De la Serre boasts:

on sçait que Thomas Morus s'est acquis une reputation que toutes les autres Comedies du temps n'avoient jamais eüe. Monsieur le Cardinal de Richelieu qui m'entend a pleuré dans toutes les representations qu'il a veuës de cette piece. . . . Le Palais Royal étoit trop petit pour contenir ceux que la curiosité attiroit à cette Tragedie. On y süoit au mois de Decembre, & l'on tua quatre Portiers de compte fait la premiere fois qu'elle fut jouëe. Voila ce qu'on appelle de bonnes pièces: Monsieur Corneille n'a point de



preuves si puissantes de l'excellence des sieñes, & je luy cederay volontiers le pas quand il aura fait tuer cinq Portiers en un seul jour. (*Parnasse reformé*, Amsterdam, 1671, pp. 48–9.)

Jean Puget de la Serre (1593?–1665) produced his *Thomas Morus* in 1642. *The Mirror Which Flatters Not*, translated in 1638, was dedicated to Charles I and his queen.

PAGE 88:16. Richard Flecnoe (d. 1678) was author of a play, *Love's Kingdom* (1678), and of *A Short Treatise on the English Stage*. Dryden gave him immortality of a sort by making him Shadwell's predecessor as ruler over nonsense in *MacFlecnoe*.

PAGE 88:17. Thomas Jordan (1612?–85), actor, writer of prologues, dedications, and pageants, and poet to the Corporation of London.

PAGE 88:24. The inevitable listing of the parts of tragedy. See note to page 131:17.

PAGE 88:29. Horace, *Epistolae*, II, i, 188, where the text reads *incertos oculos*. Dryden and St. Evremond had briefly objected to the excesses of opera before Rymer, but it was not until the permanent establishment of Italian opera in England in 1705 that attacks became general, with Dennis, Addison, and Pope for once in agreement. Rymer's brief remarks anticipate most of the later arguments: opera is contrary to nature and common sense, it is effeminate and enervating, and it drives out legitimate drama. Rymer, like Dennis later, objected not to music in drama but to the extravagance of the French and Italian forms. He had written an elaborate masque for *Edgar*, which his more austere views in 1692 might have repudiated; but even the grave dances of the Spanish Armada play he is about to sketch are operatic embellishments of a sort.

PAGE 89:8. Waller, "Lines Writ in the Tasso of her R. H.," l. 10 in *Poems*, ed. Thorn-Drury, p. 216.

PAGE 89:10. *pensees ingenieuses*: Spingarn suggests that Rymer is thinking of Bouhours' *Pensées ingénieuses des anciens et des modernes* (1689).

PAGE 89:11. *Baptista*: Jean Baptiste Lully (1639–87), the Italian-born composer, director of the French Opera, who with the librettist Quinault determined the course of opera in France.

PAGE 89:14. *Corybantes* and *Semiviri Galli* were common terms for the castrated priests of Cybele; the pun is almost inevitable.

PAGE 89:21. Taken from Pellisson, *Histoire de l'Académie Française*, pp. 79–80. *La Passion de Nostre Seigneur* in burlesque verse does exist as an eight-page leaflet. The fashion for burlesque had penetrated Eng-

land, and in 1692 even John Dennis published his *Poems in Burlesque*. Rymer had been a minor victim. His translation of Ovid's "Penelope to Ulysses" had been twice burlesqued in 1680, in *The Wits Paraphras'd* and in Radcliffe's *Ovid Travestie*. Rymer's attack on burlesque probably owes nothing to Boileau's in *L'Art poétique*, I, 79 ff.

PAGE 90:2. *The Persians* was produced seven, not forty years after the Battle of Salamis.

PAGE 90:17. Rymer has somehow transposed the order of events. Darius does not come from the tomb until after the messenger has told his tidings.

PAGE 91:7. As Spingarn pointed out, the idea for an ideal plot came from Scaliger, *Poetices*, III, xcvi:

If a tragedy is to be composed from this last story, it should not begin with the departure of Ceyx, for as the whole time for stage-representation is only six or eight hours, it is not true to life to have a storm arise, and the ship founder, in a part of the sea from which no land is visible. Let the first act be a passionate lamentation, the chorus to follow with execrations of sea life; the second act, a priest with votive offerings conversing with Alcyone and her nurse, altars, fire, pious sentiments, the chorus following with approbation of the vows; the third act, a messenger announcing the rising of a storm, together with rumors as to the ship, the chorus to follow with mention of shipwrecks, and much apostrophizing of Neptune; the fourth act tumultuous, the report found true, shipwrecks described by sailors and merchants, the chorus bewailing the event as though all were lost; the fifth act, Alcyone peering anxiously over the sea and sighting far off a corpse, followed by the resolution, when she was about to take her own life. (trans. H. M. Padelford, *Select Translations from Scaliger's Poetics*, New York, 1905, pp. 60-61.)

Denores, *Poetica* (Padua, 1588), p. 483, similarly gives a sample plot taken from Boccaccio; his scenario is more elaborate but omits the chorus.

PAGE 91:34. Gildon erupts: "Cou'd any Pugg in *Barbary* be so ignorant of *common Sense* and *Reason* as this? he must Pardon the Expression, 'tis his own to a much greater Man, than himself" (*Miscellaneous Letters*, p. 72).

PAGE 92:12. The final choruses of *Medea*, *Alcestis*, *Helen*, *Andromache*, and *The Bacchanals* all end with this sentiment.

PAGE 92:35. The conclusion of this chapter is full of veiled hostility

to Dryden. "Spanish-Fryar" is of course a reference to Dryden's play, "St. Xaviere" to his translation of Bouhours' life of St. Francis Xavier. The impudence of suggesting that Dryden, now a Catholic, should write the scene probably accounts for the friar in the second act, though he also corresponds to the priest in Scaliger's ideal plot. "Pit, Box, and Gallery" is the favorite phrase of Bayes in *The Rehearsal*; according to the 1704 *Key* this was the usual language of the Honourable Edward Howard at the rehearsal of his plays (*Rehearsal*, ed. Arber, London, 1869, pp. 29-30). But any reference to *The Rehearsal* would be referred to Dryden.

PAGE 93:28. This statement occurs in the pseudo-Platonic dialogue, *Minos*, 321, B.

PAGE 94:20. Scholia to Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 510, 530. But see Haigh, *Attic Theatre* (London, 1907), p. 50. Gildon, in his draft plan for an English academy, follows this idea: "No Tragic, nor Comic Poet, to have a Play acted, nor to be admitted, till past 28 Years old at least, (none in *Athens* being admitted till past thirty) for the Performances of the Drama require a fixt and settled Judgment, or a Knowledge of Mankind, which few have before that time" (*The Post-Man Robb'd of His Mail*, London, 1719, p. 335).

PAGE 94:21. *Seldens Marmora*: The text of the Marmor Parium from which much of our knowledge of the Greek theater is derived was first published by John Selden in *Marmora arundeliana* (1624).

PAGE 94:23. *Comædodidascalus*, *Tragædodidascalus*: These compounds refer not to one who instructs the people but rather to the trainer of the actors and chorus. See Liddell & Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. διδάσκω, III, and Haigh, p. 62.

PAGE 94:27. Cicero, *De claris oratoribus*, XVIII, 72. Rymer's quotation is not exact. *Doceo* here has the same meaning as διδάσκω above.

PAGE 94:29. Horace, *Ars poetica*, 288.

PAGE 94:30. Aristophanes, *Knights*, 515-16.

PAGE 94:31. Gildon (*Miscellaneous Letters*, p. 77) charges that Rymer had taken this statement from Rapin (he did not), and later thrice plagiarizes it himself (Rowe, *Shakespeare*, 7, lxi; *Life of Betterton*, London, 1710, p. 6; and *Laws of Poetry*, London, 1721, p. 151). Rymer's reference is not very clear, suggesting that he did not have it at first hand; I have been unable to find the statement in Libanius or in any of the grammarians named Demetrius. For references to the expense of plays, see Boekh, *Public Economy of Athens* (London, 1828), 2, 207-16.

PAGE 95:1. Demosthenes, *Olynthiac*, I, xix. The Theoric Fund had

been created by Pericles to enable the poor to attend public festivals, but in time it became a large special fund, and even to suggest a diversion of it was a capital offense.

PAGE 95:10. Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 1013–17.

PAGE 95:16. *Ibid.*, 1022–7.

PAGE 95:19. *Thimaleon*: Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 1040–1:

Πολλὰς ἀρετὰς ἐποίησεν,  
Πατρόκλων, Τεύκρων θυμολέοντων.

i.e. of lion-hearted Teucers. Early Latin translations also mistranslate *θυμολέων* into a legendary hero similar in name to the historical Timoleon.

PAGE 95:21. Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 1053–6. The closest to this “rule” in Plato is *Republic*, III, 401, B; Rymer may be thinking of the entire section he quotes later, p. 104.

PAGE 95:33. In some form or other this statement could be found in almost any edition of Aristophanes. It goes back to an early life, printed as XI by Dindorf, *Aristophanis comædiæ* (Oxford, 1835). See also *Acharnians*, 646 ff.

PAGE 96:5. Aristophanes, *Knights*, 666, 681–2.

PAGE 96:10. Not a direct quotation. Rymer is using *Wasps*, 1029 ff., the parabasis to the *Acharnians*, and perhaps also that to the *Knights*.

PAGE 96:27. *Vertuoso*: Thomas Shadwell’s *The Virtuoso* was published in 1676.

PAGE 96:34. Horace, *Ars poetica*, 334.

PAGE 96:36. Most of this is derived from Rapin, II, xxii: “*Catullus* made one Tragedy of *Alcmeon*, out of which *Cicero* cites some Verses in his *Lucullus*; *Gracchus* made *Thyestes*, whereof *Censorinus* makes mention; *Cæsar* made *Adrastus*, whereof *Festus* speaks; *Rutilius* made *Astyanax*, of which *Fulgentius* speaks; *Mecænas* made *Octavia*, which *Priscian* mentions; *Ovid* made *Medea*, of which *Quintilian* gives some account.” Of the others, the *Oedipus* of Julius Caesar and the *Ajax* of Augustus are mentioned by Suetonius (*Julius*, LVI, 7, and *Augustus*, LXXXV, 2). Rymer’s mention of a *Medea* by Maecenas and Rapin’s of a *Thyestes* by Gracchus are errors.

PAGE 97:7. Horace, *Ars poetica*, 286–7. Gildon (*Miscellaneous Letters*, p. 79) rightly corrects Rymer, pointing out that *non minimum* is not faint commendation, but equals *magnum* or *maximum*.

PAGE 97:9. Diomedes, *Ars grammatica* (Keil, *Grammatici Latini*, Leipzig, 1857, p. 490).

PAGE 97:22. *Grassatores*: Cato, quoted by Aulus Gellius, XI, ii, 5.

PAGE 97:28. Livy, VII, ii, 3–8.

PAGE 98:5. *Heart of Hercules*: Aristophanes, *Wasps*, 1030. See above, p. 96.

PAGE 98:8. Plautus, *Captivi*, 1033–4. The passage is quoted by De Voisin, p. 245.

PAGE 98:10. Quintilian, X, i, 99–100; not bk. VI, as Rymer has it.

PAGE 98:15. Horace, *Epistolae*, II, i, *passim*.

PAGE 98:18. *Aeneid*, VI, 847, 851–2. Gildon (*Miscellaneous Letters*, pp. 79–80) points out that these lines by no means imply that Virgil did not consider that the Romans excelled the Greeks in other things than government.

PAGE 98:28. Terence, *Hecyra*, prologue II, 39–40; prologue I, 3–5.

PAGE 99:23. Horace, *Epistolae*, II, i, 160–3. The first of these lines Rymer had used as title-page motto for this work.

PAGE 100:9. Material on the early Christian attitude toward the stage was abundant. The controversy had momentarily died down in England but was at its height in France. See Urbain and Levesque, *L'Eglise et le théâtre* (Paris, 1930), introduction, for the debate in France, and Spingarn, *Essays*, I, lxxxii, for bibliographical references. Rymer has relied heavily on Joseph de Voisin, *La Défense du traité de Monseigneur le Prince de Conti* (1671), for many of his quotations. See above, note to p. 83:3.

PAGE 100:20. Tertullian, *De Idololatria*, XVIII, quoted by De Voisin, p. 71, and again, p. 73.

PAGE 100:24. *Apostolic Constitutions and Canons*, VIII, 32. Rymer could have got his citation either from Conti, *Traité de la comédie* (Paris, 1667), p. 17 (3d pagination), or from De Voisin, p. 113. Both give the reference correctly.

PAGE 100:25. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogica catachesis*, I, vi (Migne, *Patrologia Græca*, 33, col. 1069), quoted by Conti (p. 51, 3d pag.), and by De Voisin, p. 85, and again, p. 212.

PAGE 100:28. Tertullian, *De spectaculis*, IV, quoted by Conti (p. 24, 3d pag.), and cited by De Voisin, p. 58.

PAGE 100:34. St. Clement, St. Cyprian, and St. Basil are frequently cited by De Voisin, and the two former by Conti.

PAGE 100:36. Chrysostom, *De Davide et Saule homilia III* (Migne, *Patrologia Græca*, 54, cols. 696–7), quoted by Conti (p. 58, 3d pag.), and by De Voisin, p. 92.

PAGE 101:4. Augustine, *Epistola* 202, *ad Nectarinum*, quoted by De Voisin, p. 254.

PAGE 101:7. Tertullian, *De spectaculis*, XXIII, quoted by De Voisin, p. 235. Rymer's quotation is not accurate. *Pantofles* here reflects the

proverb, "to stand upon pantofles"—to be proud. Puttenham had also translated *cothurni* as *pantofles* (Smith, *Essays*, 2, 35–6). Drake, in *The Ancient and Modern Stages Survey'd* (London, 1699), p. 26, probably taking his information from Rymer, commented on the passage: "Here the Devil shew'd himself an Engineer, to lay a Trap so long before hand, to contrive and invent these Buskins only to falsify in appearance, what was said a thousand years after."

PAGE 101:22. For Christian fears about the existence of the antipodes, see Andrew D. White, *The Warfare of Science with Theology* (New York, 1895), 1, 102–5.

PAGE 101:23. Clement, *Stromata*, VI, x (Migne, *Patrologia Græca*, 9, 302).

PAGE 101:26. Jerome, *Apologia adversus libros Rufini*, I, xxx (Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, 23, cols. 440–2), quoted by De Voisin, p. 258.

PAGE 101:27. Augustine, *Confessions*, I, xiii, quoted by De Voisin, p. 260.

PAGE 101:30. Gratian, *Decretum*, I, xxxvii (Basel, 1511, fol. 38<sup>r</sup>), quoted by De Voisin, p. 258.

PAGE 102:2. Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, V, xvii–xviii, quoted by De Voisin, p. 262.

PAGE 102:9. This is also from De Voisin, pp. 262–3, who cites as authority, "Vetus Auctor in vita S. Gregor. Nazianz." I have been unable to identify it further.

PAGE 102:22. Pedro de Guzman, *Bienes de el honesto trabajo y daños de la ociosidad* (Madrid, 1614), pp. 231–2, quoted by De Voisin, pp. 69–70.

PAGE 102:32. *Epistolae obscurorum virorum*: This famous defense of Reuchlin and attack on the complacency of the Dominican order first appeared in 1515, written in part by Johann Jäger (Crotus Rubianus) and Ulrich von Hutten. *Poeta* is used throughout as a term of reproach; Erasmus is specifically referred to as a poet in pt. II, xx, xxxviii, xxxix. Kullen is of course Cologne. Rymer probably missed the satire, as Steele did later.

PAGE 102:35. *Campanella*: This statement is one of the few not taken from De Voisin, and seems unlikely for Campanella. Rymer has probably given a wrong reference and has defeated his editor's attempts to track it down.

PAGE 103:3. Translated from Florimond de Rémond, *Histoire de la naissance de l'hérésie*, VII, xvi (Rouen, 1622), p. 1043. This work, first published in 1605, allots an entire chapter to Marot's Psalms. While Marot himself did not break with the Catholic church, his trans-



lation of the Psalms was used in Huguenot services, and an edition had been published in Geneva in 1543 with a preface by Calvin.

PAGE 103:15. The Edict of Nantes had been revoked in 1685. The Biblical reference is Psalms 137:4.

PAGE 103:24. Lactantius, *Divinarum institutionum*, VI, xx, quoted by De Voisin, pp. 254–5, and again, pp. 272–3.

PAGE 104:4–105:32. The reference to Mercury is from *Laws*, XII, 941, A; otherwise this passage is condensed from *Republic*, II, 377–83, and III, 388–9.

PAGE 104:18. *Iliad*, XXIV, 527–30, quoted in *Republic*, II, 379, D.

PAGE 104:22. *Iliad*, IV, 16 ff.; *Iliad*, XX; both cited in *Republic*, II, 379, E.

PAGE 104:28. From the lost *Niobe* of Aeschylus, quoted in *Republic*, II, 380, A.

PAGE 105:5. *Odyssey*, XVII, 485, quoted in *Republic*, II, 381, D.

PAGE 105:9. *Iliad*, II, 7 ff. Not cited by Plato, but see below, pp. 107 and 109.

PAGE 105:13. From a lost play, quoted in *Republic*, II, 383, B.

PAGE 105:23. *Iliad*, XVIII, 54–6, quoted in *Republic*, III, 388, C. In this and the two following passages Rymer quotes Hobbes's translation of the *Iliad*.

PAGE 105:26. *Iliad*, XVI, 433–4, 459–60; only the former lines are quoted in *Republic*, III, 388, C.

PAGE 105:31. *Iliad*, I, 599–600, quoted in *Republic*, III, 389, A. Dryden's translation of this passage, in which according to a recent critic "the crudity reaches its high-Dutch climax," may be colored by Rymer's discussion, or at least by the Hobbes translation which Rymer is using (See Douglas Knight, *Pope and the Heroic Tradition*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1951, p. 52).

PAGE 106:4. Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 1078–85.

PAGE 106:13. *Ibid.*, 1477–8.

PAGE 106:20. Euripides, *Hippolytus*, 612; Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 101–2, 1471. The line is also cited by Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, III, xv.

PAGE 106:27. This story derives from the early lives of Aristophanes, reprinted in most early editions of the plays. See *Aristophanis comœdiæ*, ed. Dindorf, 4, i, 35, 38.

PAGE 107:13. Aristotle, *Poetics*, XXV, 7.

PAGE 107:22. *Iliad*, IV, 69.

PAGE 107:24. Condensed from *Iliad*, II, 7–13.

PAGE 107:30. See above, p. 104.

PAGE 107:31. Rymer explains this later, p. 109.

PAGE 108:4. Probably Romans 11:33.

PAGE 108:4. Rymer had earlier denounced the sort of allegory supposedly practiced by Ariosto (p. 5), and probably would have objected to any radical allegory in the medieval mode. But the treatment of classical myths as moral fables was well established: Bacon's *De sapientia veterum* and Sandys' commentary on Ovid are two comprehensive 17th-century examples; See also Spingarn, *Essays*, I, 244. Rymer here is influenced by Dacier, who even more than Rapin and Le Bossu insists that the plot or fable have allegorical meaning; see also Swedenberg, pp. 12-14, 166-8.

PAGE 108:20. Huet had stated that Locman was the Arab name for Aesop and that the Arabs considered him a Hebrew while the Persians called him an Ethiopian (pp. 124-5). Huet's essay, *De l'origine des romans*, first appeared as a preface to De Segrais's *Zayde* in 1670 and was often reprinted both with that work and separately. The first English translation appeared in 1672. It has crossed my mind that this translation may have been by Rymer. The preface, informed, informal, confident, clever, and sometimes vulgar, is about what might have been expected of Rymer at that date. There is not enough evidence to force this conjecture; fortunately, the issue is not of great importance.

PAGE 108:30. Galatians 4:24.

PAGE 108:31. Origin, *Contra Celsum*, IV, *passim*, especially xxxix-xlv.

PAGE 109:6. The idea that the wisdom of the Gentiles was derived from the Hebrews was sometimes used by the Church Fathers, particularly in defense of pagan literature. It had been developed by Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata*, V) and Eusebius (*Praeparatio evangelica*, XIII, especially chaps. xii-xiii); the Fathers were concerned with it mainly insofar as it affected Plato (Augustine, *Civitatis Dei*, VIII, xi). For references see Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* (Leipzig, 1893), I, 876-80, and Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (New York, 1953), pp. 219-20. The theory had in Rymer's time been revived in two compendious works, Theophilus Gale, *The Court of the Gentiles* (London, 1669-77), and L. Thomassin, *La Méthode d'étudier et d'enseigner chrétiennement et solidement les lettres humaines par rapport aux lettres divines et aux Écritures* (Paris, 1681-82). Even today the idea is occasionally found in religious tracts. There is a similar argument in Dryden's preface to *Religio laici* that pagan learning, or the common ideas of the deists, are really revelation handed down from Noah through Japheth. But Rymer's immediate source here is Dacier, who does not argue that Homer knew Hebrew

myths but who does in his commentary on *Poetics*, XXVI, cite analogies between Greek poets and the Scriptures to defend the former. The example of Ahab (I Kings 22:20–2) is taken over from Dacier (pp. 452–3) complete with French spelling.

PAGE 109:14. As in the Rapin preface (p. 3), Rymer tries to make a formalist of Averroës. Probably the passage he is paraphrasing is: “Huius libelli propositum est exponere id, quod in libro Poeticę Aristotelis de regulis vniversalibus, atque cōmunibus, omnibus vel pluribus nationibus continentur: cū tamen multa in eo contineantur, quę non sunt regulę proprię Arabum Poesi, necque eorum consuetudini” (*Aristotelis Opera*, Venice, 1550–52, 2, pt. 2, fol. 89<sup>r</sup>). But see note to p. 3:9.

PAGE 109:35. I Corinthians 15:33 is supposedly a quotation from the *Thais* of Menander, as Sidney, Milton, and many others noted. The line has also been ascribed to Euripides.

PAGE 110:2. *Aeneid*, II, 390.

PAGE 110:6. *Ibid.*, VII, 312. Rymer had earlier admitted that “many particulars in Sacred Story are neither *Heroick*, nor indeed consistent with the common principles of morality” (p. 8). Here he uses the analogy of Scripture to justify indecorum in the classics. Rymer’s notions of decorum were not so rigid that they could not be changed as the argument required.

PAGE 110:12. Judges 5:23.

PAGE 110:17. D’Aubignac in his “Project pour le rétablissement du théâtre françois” at the end of his *Pratique du Théâtre* asks for government supervision of plays. Rymer’s idea was taken up by Blackmore in the preface to *Prince Arthur* (Spingarn, *Essays*, 3, 233) and by Gildon (Rowe, *Shakespeare*, 7, p. lxvii, and far more extensively in the last letters of *The Post-Man Robb’d of His Mail*).

PAGE 110:22. Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 1044.

PAGE 110:26. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, IV, 32, quoted by De Voisin, p. 46, and again, p. 350.

PAGE 112:17. *Bibiena*: Cardinal Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena. His comedy *Calendra*, an imitation of the *Menachmi* of Plautus, was performed in 1514.

PAGE 112:18. Ariosto’s *Cassaria* (performed 1508) and *I Suppositi* (performed 1509) were published in 1525 and were later rewritten in verse. *Il Negromante* and *Lena* appeared in 1538; a fifth comedy, *I Studenti*, was left incomplete.

PAGE 112:18. Alessandro Piccolomini (1508–78), commentator on Aristotle’s *Poetics*. His two comedies, *Alessandro* and *Amor costante*, appeared in 1586.

PAGE 112:18. Niccolo Machiavelli, aside from his<sup>r</sup> political works, wrote at least two comedies, *Mandragola* and *Clizia*, printed in 1520, and translated the *Andria* of Terence.

PAGE 112:21. Gian Giorgio Trissino (1478–1550); his blank-verse drama with chorus, *Sofonisba*, finished in 1513, was regarded as the first regular play.

PAGE 112:21. *Ruscalli*: Giovanni Ruscellai (1475–1525); his tragedy *Rosmunda* appeared in 1516. He also wrote *Oreste*, a paraphrase of *Iphigenia in Tauris*.

PAGE 112:21. Giovanbattista Giraldi Cinthio (1504–73), author of numerous plays, of which *Orbecche* (1541) is the best known. His collected plays were published at Venice, 1593.

PAGE 112:21. Tasso's tragedy, *Il Re Torrismondo* (1587), had been mentioned earlier by Rymer, p. 21.

PAGE 112:32. The reference in Castelvetro has eluded me.

PAGE 113:1. *Marot's Psalms*: See above, p. 103.

PAGE 113:9. Rymer printed the French document, an extract from the registers of Parlement, December 9, 1541, as an appendix, perhaps only to swell his volume. Since all relevant passages are here translated, the appendix has been omitted. The document was printed in De Voisin, pp. 308–16. The debate resulted in an injunction which the king refused to sustain.

PAGE 116:5. The *arrêt* of November 17, 1548, forbade the Confrères de la Passion to act religious plays. Text in Parfaict, *Histoire du théâtre françois* (Paris, 1734–49), 2, 2–4, and in Bureau, *Le Théâtre et sa législation* (Paris, 1898), pp. 26–7.

PAGE 116:7. *Peter l'Ariveu*: Pierre de Larivey (1540–1612?), whose *Les six premières comédies . . . à l'imitation des anciens Grecs, Latins et modernes Italiens* was published in 1579 and reached a second edition in 1597. Three more plays were added in 1611. For the quotation, see his *Comédies* (Paris, 1855), 1, 2.

PAGE 116:10. Of about seven hundred plays by Alexandre Hardy (1595?–1631?) only thirty-four survive. See Lancaster, *History of French Dramatic Literature in the Seventeenth Century* (Baltimore, 1929–42), 1, I, 33 ff. The statement that Corneille took Hardy for his model derives from the *examen* to *Mélite* (*Œuvres*, Paris, 1862), 1, 137.

PAGE 116:18. Declaration of Louis XIII, April 16, 1641, quoted by De Voisin, pp. 317–18. Text in Parfaict, 6, 131; Isambert, *Recueil général des anciennes lois françaises* (Paris, 1821–33), 16, 536–7; Bureau, pp. 46–7.

PAGE 116:24. Corneille's *Théodore* appeared in 1645. Rymer's quota-

tion comes from the dedication to the play, repeated later in the *examen* (*Œuvres*, 5, 8–9 and 11–12). See also D'Aubignac, II, i, and II, viii. D'Aubignac regarded the play as Corneille's masterpiece: ". . . yet all the rest is in so much regularity, and there is so much Art and Conduct shewed by the Poet, that if the choice of the Subject had answer'd the skill of the Author, I believe we might propose this Play as a most perfect Model."

PAGE 117:26. This represents an opinion completely different from that Rymer held when writing *Edgar*. Love as the subject for tragedy was so completely established that Corneille, arguing that it should have only a secondary part in a play, admitted that the statement seemed strange; he defended himself by citing the authority of the ancients (*Œuvres*, 1, 24 ff.). Love as a tragic subject was regularly denounced by moralists, and among the critics Rapin (II, xx) and Dacier (p. 80) joined in the attack. In 1677 Dryden in the *Heads of an Answer to Rymer* had played with the idea that modern tragedies, concerning themselves with love, were therefore superior to those of the ancients; but by 1690 he could refer to "love and honour, the mistaken topics of tragedy" (*Works*, 7, 307). Gildon attempted a defense against Rymer and Rapin, arguing that the practice of the ancients should not limit us, that love can be elevated and majestic, that it is permitted in the epic, a more elevated form than tragedy, and that it is a primary passion while pity and fear are derivative (*Miscellaneous Letters*, pp. 145–71).

PAGE 117:33. Gildon flatly denies this statement: "And let Mr. Rymer say what he please, I can prove that 'twas the Love of *Brieseis*, that troubl'd *Achilles*, and confirm'd his anger, as well as the meer affront of having his prize taken from him, but of that in another place" (*Miscellaneous Letters*, pp. 111–12). Dennis later discusses the parallel case of *Chryseis* and *Agamemnon*, arguing among other points that if *Agamemnon* had been passionately in love it would have served as a check to his pride and his wrath (*Works*, 2, 151).

PAGE 117:36. Horace, *Carmina*, I, vi, 5–6.

PAGE 118:4. On rhyme, as on love, Rymer has changed his mind, though even in *Edgar* his approval had been qualified.

PAGE 118:6. *Agissante*: See above, p. 86:29 and note.

PAGE 118:8. Horace, *Ars poetica*, 82.

PAGE 118:16. Cf. Rapin, II, x: "That *Monotomie* of the *Alexandrin* Verse which can suffer no difference, nor any variety of numbers, seems, to me, likewise a great weakness in the *French Poetry*: and though the vigour of the Verse might be sustain'd either by the great Subjects or by an extraordinary *Genius* and *Wit* [*génie et esprit*] above the

common rate, yet this sort of Verse will grow tedious and irksom in a long Poem."

PAGE 118:22. This version of the book of Psalms, licensed for use in churches, was begun by Thomas Sternhold in 1549 and completed by John Hopkins and others in 1561. Its dogtrotting fourteeners were easy objects of ridicule. Rymer, oddly, turns the line he quotes into an Alexandrine; originally it read, "O Sing ye now unto the Lord a new and pleasant song" (Psalm 98, translated by Hopkins).

PAGE 118:33. *Campanella*: See above, p. 102.

PAGE 118:35. Pedro de Guzman, *Bienes de el honesto trabajo* (Madrid, 1614), pp. 349–50, quoted by De Voisin, pp. 201 and 290–1.

PAGE 119:9. Antonio de Escobar y Mendoza, the Spanish theologian who was ridiculed by Pascal in *Lettres à un provincial*. The passage is quoted by De Voisin, p. 201, and again p. 290, with the reference, "Moralis Theolog. tract. 5. exam. 5. cap. 4. n. 137." The book in questions is probably *Universæ theologiæ moralis disquisitiones* (Lyons, 1652), which I have been unable to locate; the passage is not in his *Liber theologiæ moralis* (Lyons, 1646). The statute referred to (the text is lost) was effective until 1650; see Cotarelo y Mori, *Bibliografía de las controversias sobre la licitud del teatro en España* (Madrid, 1904), pp. 634–5.

PAGE 119:18. This sentence is echoed from the Rapin preface, p. 9.

PAGE 119:19. Sidney had noted that British poetry was still extant in Wales (Smith, *Essays*, I, 153).

PAGE 119:20. Rymer probably means the coin illustrated in Speed, *Historie of Great Britaine* (3d ed., London, 1632), p. 32. The reverse shows a man playing a harp and has the name CVNOBELI.

PAGE 119:22. The pseudo-Plautine comedy *Querolus* was first printed as an anonymous work by Pierre Daniel in 1564. Rymer must refer to the Paræus edition of Plautus, 1610 (reprinted 1619, 1641), in which the play is printed in an appendix as "M. Acci Plauti Sarsinatis Umbri Alularia prorsa: sive Gildæ Sapientis Britannii Querolus." Paræus gives no reason for this strange ascription. Gerard Vossius, *De Historicis Latinis* (Leyden, 1627), p. 237, states that the play is ascribed to Gildas in manuscripts and that the ascription is stylistically possible. Vossius is wrong about the manuscripts and gives no clue as to how the ascription arose. It may come from the last word of the usual title of Gildas' work, *De excidio Britanniae liber querulus*. Rymer's date, 493 A.D., probably comes from Vossius (p. 231), who uses Bede's statement that the Battle of Mt. Badon, which was Gildas' birth date, occurred forty-four years after the coming of the Anglo-Saxons. Poly-



dore Virgil, who first published Gildas, stated that he lived c. 580; the first English translation (1638) stated on its title page that he flourished in 546.

PAGE 119:25. Thaliessin and Merlin were often coupled. Rymer may be drawing on Huet who mentioned (p. 192) that Thaliessin and Melkin (*sic*, all eds.) had written the history of King Arthur in the middle of the 6th century. The anonymous translator of Huet in 1672 (see note to p. 108:20) stated: ". . . thou mayst not impeach our Author for making *Melkin* and *Thaliessin* English: seeing that Foreiners think themselves not bound to take notice when this Isle was called *Albion*, when *Britain*, when *England*; besides that, writing in *French*, if he had call'd them *Britains*, they might have passed with some for *French Britains*, and thereby our Nation have lost the honour of having given Birth to the first Romances in *Europe*."

PAGE 119:30. Rymer's quotation most nearly approximates that of Matthew Paris, *Chronica majora*, ed. Luard, Rolls Series (London, 1872), 1, 541. The statement is also in William of Malmesbury, *De gestis regum*, ed. Stubbs, Rolls Series (London, 1887), 2, 302; Matthew of Westminster, *Flores historiarum*, ed. Luard, Rolls Series (London, 1890), 1, 594; Knighton, *Chronicon*, ed. Lumby, Rolls Series (London, 1889), p. 56, where the statement is quoted from Higden. Du Cange, s.v. *cantilena*, probably gave Rymer some of his references.

PAGE 119:35. Joseph of Exeter's *De bello troiano* was first printed at Basel in 1558 as *Daretis Phrygii . . . de bello troiano . . . libri sex a Cornelio Nepote in Latinum conversi*. Leland (*Comentarii de scriptoribus britannicis*, ed. Hall, London, 1709, p. 236) first recognized the true authorship, and the poem was printed with Joseph of Exeter's name at Frankfurt in 1620. Rymer could have got his information from Winstanley, *Lives of the Poets* (London, 1687), p. 8.

PAGE 120:4. The discussion of Provençal poetry which follows was called by Pope the best account in our language (Spence, *Anecdotes*, ed. Singer, London, 1820, p. 172). Following Rymer, both Pope (Ruffhead, *A Life of Alexander Pope*, London, 1769, p. 425) and Gray (Letter to Warton, April 15, 1770, in *Correspondence*, ed. Toynbee and Whibley, Oxford, 1935, 3, 1122-5) planned their histories of English poetry to begin with the school of Provence. Considerable influence from these plans and from Rymer's belief that Chaucer adapted Provençal poetry remains in Warton's *History of English Poetry*. Dryden (*Preface to the Fables*, in *Essays*, 2, 249) was the first of many who drew from these sections of Rymer. Actually, no other account was available in English until Ste. Palaye's *Histoire littéraire des troubadours* (1774) was trans-

lated in 1779; there were few printed texts other than the hopelessly inaccurate ones Rymer used, and in England no manuscripts (Gray, 2, 834). Rymer's principal source is Jean de Nostredame's *Les Vies des plus célèbres et anciens poètes Provençaux* (Lyons, 1575), which Rymer used in an Italian translation by Giovanni Giudici published the same year but incorporating many minor changes. The work abounds in romantic improbabilities: most of the lives of the troubadours are bald fabrications, as are Nostredame's accounts of the courts of love (see the edition by Anglade, Paris, 1913). César de Nostredame's *Histoire et chronique de Provence* and Pasquier's *Recherches de la France* were known to Rymer but were based largely on Jean de Nostredame. The only source independent of him was Francesco Redi's *Bacco in Toscana* (1685), a dithyrambic poem elaborately annotated with notes drawing on Provençal manuscripts in Redi's keeping. Redi, whose biological interests brought him into contact with the Royal Society, would be a name known to Rymer's readers; possibly this is why he alone of Rymer's sources is mentioned. For the effect of Rymer's statements about Provençal literature on English literary history, see my article, "Chaucer and the School of Provence," *PQ*, 25 (1946), 321-42.

PAGE 120:7. *Gay Science*: Rymer probably took the term from Huet, p. 195; *science guaye* occurs only in the 1670 editions; Huet later changed it to *guay saber*.

PAGE 120:9. An exaggeration characteristic of Rymer. Bembo (*Della volgar lingua*) and Speroni (*Dialogo delle lingue*) point out the debt of Italian to Provençal. Rymer probably singled out these two because they were most frequently mentioned by Nostredame; Pasquier (*Recherches de la France*, Paris, 1643, VII, iv, 606) singles out only these two. Rymer's statement is closest to that of La Mesnardière: "Mais il n'est pas nécessaire de faire auoüer [aux Italiens] qu'ils ont appris de se Royaume toute la Poésie qu'ils scauent; puisque Speron & le Bembe, deux Autheurs Italiens, nous en rendent les hommages, & confessent sincèrement de nous en estre redeuables" (pp. 000-PPP [*sic*]). La Mesnardière thus claims Provençal literature to enrich French at the expense of Italian, much as Rymer claims it to enrich English at the expense of French. See also Huet, p. 202.

PAGE 120:12. Another exaggeration. Nostredame points out Petrarch's borrowings, even when they exist only in his imagination. See below, p. 121:18 and note, and Anglade's introduction to his edition of Nostredame.

PAGE 120:18. Philippe Mouskes, *Chronique rimée*, 22429-35. This chronicle exists in a unique manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale;

Rymer saw this passage quoted by Du Cange as a gloss to *lecator*. PAGE 120:22. Roger of Hoveden, *Chronica*, ed. Stubbs (London, 1868), 3, 143. The statement occurs as part of a letter by Hugh of Nunant and refers not to Richard but to William de Longchamp, Bishop of Ely. Rymer's error comes from having taken the quotation from Du Cange, s.v. *joculator*, where it is cited as "Rogerus Hovedenus in Ricardo I." Walpole (*Works*, London, 1798, 1, 251) and Warton (*History of English Poetry*, London, 1824, 1, 116) were both misled by Rymer's error. The same mistake was made, probably independently and in the same way, by Muratori, *Antiquitatis italicæ medii ævi*, diss. 29 (Milan, 1739), 2, 845b.

PAGE 120:34. Nostredame, trans. Giudici, p. 12; in the French text, pp. 11, 19. The reference is to Ramond Berenger III (*reg.* 1144–66).

PAGE 120:35. Nostredame, XXV.

PAGE 121:1. The statement does not occur in quite this form in Nostredame, but it is probably derived from him; Alfonso II and III of Aragon were both Counts of Provence. See Nostredame, pp. 24, 65.

PAGE 121:6. Ramond VI of Toulouse, *reg.* 1194–1222.

PAGE 121:8. *Guilhem of Agoult* and *Albert* (or *Albertet*) of *Sisteron*: Nostredame, V and L.

PAGE 121:9. *Rambald of Orange*: Rambaut III, *reg.* 1150–73. See Nostredame, XXV, and César de Nostredame, *Histoire et chronique de Provence* (Lyons, 1614), p. 183.

PAGE 121:13. Pedro II of Aragon was killed at the Battle of Muret, 1231, fighting against Simon de Montfort. The statement is not in Nostredame.

PAGE 121:18. *Anselm Faydet*: I.e. Gaucelm Faidit (the corruption is due to Nostredame and the Italians), c. 1180–c. 1215. All information here is from Nostredame (XIV), and most of it is wrong. Gaucelm did not write plays, he did not marry a nun, and Petrarch's *Il Trionfo d'amore* is not imitated from him. See Anglade's edition of Nostredame, pp. 308–9.

PAGE 121:20. Petrarch, *Il Trionfo d'amore*, IV, 55–7. The entire passage in Petrarch referring to the troubadours is quoted by Pasquier, *Recherches de la France* (Paris, 1643), p. 607, and by César de Nostredame, *Histoire et chronique de Provence*, p. 135.

PAGE 121:25. *Comedies, and Tragedies*: Anglade in his edition of Nostredame (pp. 308–9) explains: "Le mot *joglar*, que Nostredame traduit par *comique*, lui permet d'attribuer à ce troubadour des comédies et des tragédies." De Voisin, only to show that ecclesiastical authority

had condemned them, was at some pains to argue that *trouveres* or *troubadours* were *histrions* who wrote comedies (pp. 226–7).

PAGE 121:26. *livres Turnois*: This is a retranslation of *livre tornesi*, Giudici's translation of *livres wulhermenses*, which, Nostredame explains, are named from a Count of Toulouse.

PAGE 121:34. *Il Trionfo d'amore*, IV, 49–51; the passage is quoted by César de Nostredame and by Pasquier (see note to p. 121:20 above), and also by Redi, *Opere* (Milan, 1809), I, 169.

PAGE 121:36. *Fouchet*: Folquet of Marseilles, friend of Ramond V of Toulouse, and as Bishop of Toulouse the persecutor of the Albigenses. Rymer tried to Gallicize the name from Giudici's Folchetto; the usual Italian form is Folco. Rymer's account is from Nostredame, XI, except for the Dante reference (*Paradiso*, IX), which might have come from César de Nostredame, p. 169.

PAGE 122:8. *Jeffrey Rudel*: Jaufré (or Jaufred) Rudel, Prince of Blaya(?), fl. 1170. Almost nothing is known of him, and his continually recurring theme of a distant love gave rise to this legend. It is still a matter of dispute whether the poems are addressed to a heavenly or an earthly love; see Olin H. Moore, "Jaufré Rudel and the Lady of Dreams," *PMLA*, 29 (1914), 517–36, and D. W. Robertson Jr., "Amors de Terra Lonhdana," *SP*, 49 (1952), 566–82. Rymer takes the story from Nostredame, I; it is reprinted by César de Nostredame, p. 133, and again almost verbatim by Pasquier, pp. 607–8, who does not, however, quote the poem. Pope elaborated Rymer's story for Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (*Works*, ed. Elwin and Courthope, London, 1871–89, 9, 391–2), and Gildon repeats it in *The Laws of Poetry* (London, 1721), pp. 101–2.

PAGE 122:9. *Il Trionfo d'amore*, IV, 52–3. *Gianfre* may be a misprint; Pasquier (p. 607) in quoting the passage gives *Giaufre*, but old editions of Petrarch give *Gianfre*, as does César de Nostredame.

PAGE 122:24. The text is taken from Nostredame, I. Rymer's text has two printer's errors (*veu* for *ven*, and *janziray* for *jauziray*), but otherwise follows accurately the text printed by Giudici. But it was badly corrupt even in the French edition of Nostredame and worsened in the Italian. The poem properly is in seven-line stanzas, but Nostredame gives only the first four lines of each, and some of the best stanzas are omitted. Texts may be found in Raynouard, *Choix des poésies originales des troubadours* (Paris, 1816–21), 3, 101, and Appel, *Provenzalische Chrestomathie* (Leipzig, 1920), p. 54–5. Appel's text for Rymer's third stanza reads:

Ben tenc lo Senhor per vrai,  
 per qu'ieu veirai l'amor de lonh;  
 mas per un ben que me'n eschai,  
 n'ai dos mals, car tant m'es de lonh.

This is Rymer's only Provençal quotation of any length for which no translation was available, but Nostredame gives a full description of the contents of the poem.

PAGE 124:1. Savaric de Mauleon, fl. 1200–20. Rymer's information comes from Redi, *Opere*, I, 161; Redi is making numerous quotations to justify his use of the word *mottetto*:

*Salvarico di Malleone* Inglese Poeta Provenzale, che è quello stesse mentovato da *Guglielmo Britone* nel Poema della Filippide con nome di *Savaricus Malleo*, e da *Matteo Parisio*, e da *Matteo Vestmonasteriense* *Salvaricus de Mallo Leoni*; e da *Rigordo Savaricus de Mallo Leone*:

Doussament fait motz, e sos . . .

Rymer has misread Redi, who attributes the lines to Savaric himself. Guillaume le Breton was a 13th-century French chronicler; Redi is referring to his Latin poem, *Philippidos*, VI, 277.

PAGE 124:8. Redi, p. 166. What Rymer means by "the same Author" is not clear; the lines certainly have nothing to do with either Savaric de Mauleon or Guillaume le Breton. Redi's condensed citation leaves it doubtful whether he considers the lines by or about Richard:

Il Re Riccardo, manuscritto Redi:

*Coblas a teira faire adreitamen*  
*Por vos oillz enten dompna gentilz.*

Rymer's change to *adroitement* is a good illustration of what was happening in the transmission of Provençal texts.

PAGE 124:15. Quoted by Nostredame, XLI; Giudici also gives an Italian translation. The poem is not even a complete stanza. Walpole, including Richard I in his *Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors*, draws on Rymer but goes to considerable trouble to get a better text (*Letters*, ed. Toynbee, Oxford, 1903, 4, 111, 126). Text in Raynouard, *Choix des poésies originales des troubadours*, 4, 183. These lines are sometimes considered a translation from the French; see Bartsch, *Grundriss zur Geschichte der Provenzalischen Literatur* (Elberfeld, 1872), p. 189.

PAGE 124:24. Jean de Serres, *A General Inventory of the History of France*, trans. Edward Grimeston (London, 1607), pp. 178–9.

PAGE 124:30. The text is in the French edition of Nostredame, II. Since Giudici gives only an Italian translation, Rymer probably took it from César de Nostredame, p. 132. The opening lines are also in Pasquier, p. 606. This probably accounts for Rymer's "current everywhere." Actually there is no manuscript extant, and Nostredame is the only authority for the poem. That it is by Frederick I is inconceivable; Anglade in his edition of Nostredame (p. 301) tries to preserve the tradition by suggesting Frederick II. Rymer's text has one clear misprint, *ourar* for *onrar*.

PAGE 125:21. Ramond Berenger IV, son of Alfonso III of Aragon. Rymer's information is from Nostredame, XXVIII; the material is repeated in César de Nostredame, p. 205, who in addition quotes the lines from Dante, *Paradiso*, VI, 133-4.

PAGE 125:32. *Grothead*: Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, c. 1175-1253. Pope Innocent IV ordered that Grosseteste's bones be disinterred, upon which the ghost of Grosseteste appeared to him in a vision and struck him with his pastoral staff; the pope never recovered; see Matthew Paris, *Chronica majora*, ed. Luard (London, 1872), 5, 429, 470-1. The lines quoted are the opening of Grosseteste's *Chateau d'Amour*; Rymer's text was probably MS. Laud 471B.

PAGE 126:18. These statements, coming immediately after the lines from Grosseteste labeled "Provencal poetry," raise the question of what Rymer meant by Provencal. Clearly he did not recognize French and Provençal as sister languages. Nor did anyone else at the time. Corrupt texts and the current theories about the development of French language and literature made confusion easy. Of the first, enough examples have been given: Provençal texts, after passing through Nostredame's French and Giudici's Italian, had lost much of their linguistic identity. In French the usual term for what we call Provençal was *Roman* or *Romain*, not clearly distinguished from the word they used for the earlier language. And about the linguistic situation in early times they were far from clear. The common theory was set forth by Fauchet in 1581 in his *Recueil de l'origine de la langue et poésie française*, a work which Rymer probably knew. Fauchet regarded the language of the Oaths of Strassburg as *Romande*, or *Romain Rustique*; this language, an intermediate stage between Latin and French, had once been spoken throughout France but was gradually confined to the region of the Rhone and the Garonne (Fauchet, *Recueil*, ed. Espiner-Scott, Paris, 1938, pp. 53-60). In varying forms this idea that Provençal was earlier than, perhaps even the ancestor of the other Romance languages persisted into the 19th century. Fauchet explained further that *Romain*



Rustique gradually became a literary language, since it was the language most widely understood, but each poet introduced into it words from his own dialect. Or, as Huet put it, the language was Latin, corrupted by Frankish or Tudesque: "N'étoit ni Latin, ny Gaulois, ni Franc, mais mixte, où le Romain pourtant tenoit le dessus, & qui pour cela s'appeloit Roman, pour le distinguer du langage particulier de chaque pais" (pp. 197–8). The idea that Provençal was a *lingua franca* derived mainly from Bembo:

Era per tutto il Ponente la favella Provenzale ne' tempi, ne' quali ella fiori, in prezzo e in istima molta, e tra tutti gli altri idiomi di quelle parti di gran lunga primiera: conciossiacosachè ciascuno o Francese o Fiamingo o Guascone o Borgognone, o altramente di quelle nazioni che egli si fosse, il quale bene scrivere, e specialmente verseggiar volesse; quantunque egli Provenzale non fosse, lo faceva Provenzalmente. Anzi ella tanto oltre passò in riputazione e fama, che non solamente Catalani, che vicinissimi sono alla Francia, o pure Spagnuoli più addentro (tra' quali fu uno il Re Alfonso di Aragona, figliuolo di Ramondo Beringhieri) ma oltre a ciò eziandio alquanti Italiani si truova, che scrissero e poetarono Provenzalmente. (*Della volgar lingua*, in *Opere*, Milan, 1810, 10, 37.)

If Rymer had not read this key passage, he at least knew Giudici's very similar statement in his translation of Nostredame (p. 17). No English writer had done more than to distinguish Provençal as one among many French dialects. Rymer, then, was justified in regarding Provençal as a language standing in some relation to French, and in which had been written a literature that extended far beyond southern France.

PAGE 126:32. Rymer makes one point—that Chaucer improved the English language by borrowing Provençal words—and implies a second—that Chaucer's poetry borrowed from that of the troubadours. Both points were refuted by Tyrwhitt in his edition of the *Canterbury Tales* (1775) but until then had received unquestioned assent. Before Rymer it was already a commonplace to regard Chaucer as a refiner of the English language. A dissident school, represented by Verstegen (*Restitution of Decayed Intelligence*, Antwerp, 1605, pp. 203–4) and Skinner (*Etymologicon linguæ anglicanæ*, London, 1671, sig. 3B), had argued that Chaucer's borrowings had despoiled the language of almost all native grace and elegance; see Spurgeon, *Chaucer devant la critique en Angleterre* (Paris, 1911), pp. 117–24, and R. F. Jones, *The Triumph of the English Language* (Stanford, 1953), pp. 260–1. The second point, that Chaucer's poems are imitations of the Provençal, is only implied

by Rymer but becomes explicit in Dryden (*Essays*, 2, 270) and Pope (*Rape of the Lock and Other Poems*, ed. Tillotson, London, 1940, pp. 243–4); it appears in the sketches toward a history of literature in the *Muses Mercury* for June 1707 (probably by Oldmixon; see R. P. McCutcheon, "Addison and the *Muses Mercury*," *SP*, 20 [1923], 17–28), and in Pope and Gray, as well as in Warton's history. See note to p. 120:4, above, and "Chaucer and the School of Provence," *PQ*, 25 (1946), 321–42.

PAGE 127:10. By the standard of his time Rymer's Waller-worship was not too preposterous. The Soame-Dryden version of Boileau's *L'Art poétique* had rendered "Enfin Malherbe vint" (I, 131) as "Waller came last" in a similar context. Rymer was probably acquainted with Waller; according to Thomas Birch he was responsible for the elaborate Latin inscription on Waller's tomb at Beaconsfield (*A General Dictionary, Historical and Critical*, London, 1734–41, 10, 87; see also Hardy, p. cxv). He contributed three poems to the volume *Poems to the Memory of that Incomparable Poet Edmond Waller* (London, 1688), where we are told,

Language and Wit he rais'd to such a height,  
We should suspect, with him, the Empire's fate,  
Did not Auspicious *James* support the *Weight*.  
This Northern Speech refin'd to that degree,  
Soft *France* we scorn, nor envy *Italy*:  
But for a fit Comparison must seek  
In *Virgil's* Latin, or in *Homer's* Greek. (P. 7.)

PAGE 127:19. Waller, "To the King, on his Navy," ll. 31–2 (*Poems*, ed. Thorn-Drury, p. 16); the first line of the couplet reads, "To thee, his chosen, more indulgent, he . . ." The date 1632, assigned to the poem in most Restoration editions, is almost certainly wrong (Thorn-Drury). Dennis subjects the poem to a line-by-line scrutiny, "only to shew you, that Mr. Rymer has mistaken the most incorrect Copy of Verses that perhaps Mr. Waller has writ, for one of his rarest Masterpieces" (*The Impartial Critick, Works*, 1, 28).

PAGE 127:21. Dennis comments: "But methinks Mr. Rymer has a very odd Observation at the latter end of these Verses. . . . Mr. Waller does not design to praise the King for his Valour here. There is a great deal of difference betwixt Power and Valour; the last is Personal, the other in the reach of Fortune" (*ibid.*).

PAGE 127:34. Giudici in the preface to his translation of Nostredame states:

li detti Poeti Prouenzali erano chiamati alle volte Trobadours. ch'alcuni l'hanno inteso per trompatours. che nella nostra vuol dire Trombatori, & ingannatori. perche nel lor poema adulauano, per affetione, ô per disegno, & ingannauano il mondo. altri l'hanno inteso per Trompatori, perche 'l Poeta col suo Poema suona la tromba delle virtu, e delli vitii. . . . ma non hà inteso que sta parola, che vuol dire in nostra lingua. Trouatori inuentori, & imitatori cioè dotati dalla natura piu che gl'altri d'inuëtione & imitatione Poetica & alleuolte erano chiamati, Musars, violars, iugulars per che erano musici, & cantauano, & sonauano di violoni, di flauti & d'altri instrumenti musicali li lor Poemi. (Pp. 16–17; cf. French text, p. 10.)

PAGE 128:7. From Robert Mannyng of Brunne's *Handlyng Synne*, ll. 43–8, 57–61, 73–7, 4739–43; Rymer's text is derived from Bodleian MS. 415.

PAGE 128:30. *Las Phantaumarias del Paganisme* in the French text, ascribed to Arnaut Daniel by Nostredame, VII.

PAGE 128:32. Nostredame, I, states that Jaufré Rudel wrote of the wars of the Saracens and the kings of Arles.

PAGE 129:1. *La Guerra dels Baussencs* in the French text, ascribed to Elyas de Barjols by Nostredame, IV.

PAGE 129:4. Nostredame, LXXII. The troubadour is Berenguier de Parazols. The French text gives the last named tragedy as *Johannela* or *Johannada*. This is entirely Nostredame's invention, but descriptions of the plays can be found in 18th-century histories of the French stage.

PAGE 129:17. The statement that all foreigners were called French probably comes from Selden's notes on Drayton's *Polyolbion* (Drayton, *Works*, ed. Hebel, Oxford, 1931–33, 4, 183).

PAGE 129:19. Robert of Gloucester, *Metrical Chronicle*, ll. 11016–19. The MS. is Cotton Caligula A XI, but Rymer may have taken the quotation from Selden (Drayton, 4, 352).

PAGE 129:26. Stow, *Survey of London*, ed. Thoms (London, 1876), pp. 7, 337.

PAGE 130:3. "Why Come Ye not to Court?" (Skelton, *Poems*, ed. Henderson, London, 1931, p. 356). It is barely possible that by "Mahound" Skelton means the devil (*OED*, meaning 4); more probably he is associating Herod with the god he swears by. At all events, Rymer's inference from the passage shows little knowledge of medieval drama. Thomas Warton from the same passage inferred that "*Mahound*, or *Mahomet*, seems to have been anciently a character on our stage,

when nothing was fashionable but the legendary stories of the Saracens" (*Observations on the Fairy Queen*, London, 1807, 2, 265–6).

PAGE 130:6. Rymer's information about John Heywood could come from Langbaine, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, pp. 253–6.

PAGE 130:9. Probably also from Langbaine, pp. 228–31.

PAGE 130:11. Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford (1550–1604). His comedies, if they ever existed, are not extant; the statement that he wrote them derives from Puttenham's *Art of English Poesy* and Meres' *Palladis Tamia* (Smith, *Essays*, 2, 65, 320). There is no reference in Langbaine.

PAGE 130:12. Knowledge of this play had increased somewhat since Dryden spoke of *Queen Gorboduc* as a tragedy in rhyme (dedication to *The Rival Ladies*, 1664, *Essays*, 1, 5–6). Rymer, however, repeats Dryden's error in assigning the whole play to Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, despite Langbaine's statement that he was responsible only for the last two acts.

PAGE 130:35. The passage from Quintilian had been quoted earlier, p. 98.

PAGE 131. The table of contents is incomplete, carrying us only to p. 138.

PAGE 131. *Othello*, like all the plays Rymer criticizes, belonged to the King's Company and was therefore another Hart-Mohun play. To its great popularity Rymer himself pays tribute. The cast given by the 1687 quarto must refer to a performance before 1682, when Betterton took over the title role, and is about the one Rymer saw. In part it reads:

Othello	Mr. Hart.
Cassio	Mr. Kynaston.
Jago	Mr. Mohun.
Roderigo	Mr. Beeston.
Clown	Mr. Hayns.
Desdemona	Mrs. Cox.
Emillia	Mrs. Rutter.

Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus*, ed. Summers (London, n.d.), pp. 6–7, preserves an earlier cast in which Burt played Othello, Hart Cassio, and Mrs. Hughes Desdemona. Rymer's quotations are from the third quarto, 1655. This chapter is so far the best known of Rymer's work that discussion of its impact has necessarily been given in the introduction and in the headnote to *A Short View*. Notes to this chapter deal with specific points, insofar as they can be isolated. In general, one should

cite two tantalizingly brief footnotes by T. S. Eliot, "but Rymer makes out a very good case," and, "I have never, by the way, seen a cogent refutation of Thomas Rymer's objections to *Othello*" (*Selected Essays*, New York, 1932, pp. 97, 121). Recent works on *Othello* (e.g. E. E. Stoll, *Shakespeare and Other Masters*, Cambridge, Mass., 1940, and Clifford Leech, *Shakespeare's Tragedies*) show an awareness of Rymer's attack that was absent from 19th-century criticism. Rymer has, even more than he usually does, overstated his case, and stated it heartlessly. An editor can perhaps best serve by not intruding.

PAGE 131:17. The statement that the fable is the soul of tragedy is inevitable; so, likewise, is the list of parts of tragedy; both come from Aristotle (*Poetics*, VI, 7 and 14). Rymer is closest to Corneille: "Des ses six, il n'y a que le sujet dont la bonne constitution dépende proprement de l'art poétique; les autres ont besoin d'autres arts subsidiaires: les mœurs, de la morale; les sentiments, de la rhétorique; la diction, de la grammaire" (*Œuvres*, Paris, 1862, I, 23). See also Rapin, I, xvii-xxvii. Rymer's statements is taken over by Dennis, *Remarks on Cato* (*Works*, 2, 46).

PAGE 131:23. The source of *Othello* had been pointed out by Dryden (*Essays*, I, 146) and by Langbaine (*An Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, p. 461).

PAGE 132:10. Horace, *Ars poetica*, 12-13. Gildon (*Miscellaneous Letters*, pp. 98-9) argues that these verses have nothing to do with the subject, unless one can prove that the color of a man alters his species.

PAGE 132:25. Gildon (*Miscellaneous Letters*, pp. 106-8) burlesques this by handling *Oedipus the King* and *Philoctetes* in the same manner; he rather spoils the effect by arguing that *Othello* has a moral, that no man can be happy before his death, and that we should beware of unguarded passions. Better critics than Gildon have strained to find in *Othello* a moral that Rymer would approve. Theobald admits Rymer's point that Cinthio designed his tale as a warning against disproportionate marriages; Shakespeare, however, "inculcates no such Moral: but rather, that a Woman may fall in Love with the Virtues and shining Qualities of a Man; and therein overlook the Difference of Complexion and Colour" (*Shakespeare*, 7, 371). Rymer's summary moralizing was a convenient method of attack: Collier used it against *The Relapse* (Spingarn, *Essays*, 3, 278), and Dennis in all seriousness applied it to *Cato* (*Works*, 2, 45).

PAGE 132:29. Giraldi Cinthio, *Hecatommithi* (Venice, 1608), p. 318.

PAGE 133:5. Gildon's belated answer:

I do not think *Othello's* Account to the Senate of the progress of his Love with *Desdemona* so ridiculous as Mr. *Rimer* makes it, for, as for the *Canibals*; and Men whose Heads grew beneath their Shoulders, &c. being Objects of vulgar Credulity, they are as probable and as moving, as the *Cyclops* and *Harpyes* of *Virgil*; and then abating for the Colour of the *Moor*, and the improbability of his having that Post, the Tale has a great deal of *Pathos*. (Rowe, *Shakespeare*, 7, 412.)

Pope perhaps felt as Rymer did, for in his edition he relegated the last three lines quoted to a footnote as an interpolation. Warburton defended the passage rather tediously (*Shakespeare*, 8, 293–4).

PAGE 133:19. Here, according to Warburton, Rymer's "criticism only exposes his own ignorance. The circumstance was not only exactly in character, but urged with the greatest address, as the thing chiefly to be insisted on. For, by the *Venetian* law, the giving Love-potions was very criminal, as *Shakespear* without question well understood" (*Shakespeare*, 8, 290).

PAGE 133:23. Spingarn refers to *Tatler*, 240:

About the same time [about 1690] there was pasted a very hard word upon every corner of the streets. This, to the best of my remembrance, was

TETRACHYMAGOGON,

which drew great shoals of spectators about it, who read the bill that it introduced with unspeakable curiosity; and when they were sick, would have nobody but this learned man for their physician.

See also William King, *Original Works* (London, 1776), 1, 202.

PAGE 133:33. Horace, *Ars poetica*, 114–18.

PAGE 134:1. *Othello*, I, iii, 354.

PAGE 134:6. Gildon argues for the probability of the Venetians employing a Moor against the Turk, especially since the Moor is a Christian. And if it is improbable that a Moor should rise to the position of a general, there is still no inherent reason why he should not, and it is the poet's duty to do justice to nations as well as to persons (*Miscellaneous Letters*, pp. 95–8). Malone adds that it was never the policy of Venice to trust the command of an army to a native (*Shakespeare, Plays and Poems*, London, 1790, 10, 466).

PAGE 134:17. *Aeneid*, IV, 628.

PAGE 135:6. Horace, *Ars poetica*, 121, describing Achilles. But see Rapin, I, xxv: "The Poet represents . . . a *Souldier*, fierce, insolent,



surly, inconstant," and also La Mesnardière, p. 122. Gildon answers at length: (1) Horace's description, meant for Achilles, is not universally applicable; (2) the poet must consider the nation and climate of his character—Iago, selfish, jealous, reserved, revengeful, and proud, would not cast off these qualities merely by becoming a soldier; (3) Rapin's description is not incompatible with Iago; (4) if it is, Rapin himself has said that characters and manners are to be drawn from experience. The last point is supported by citing Thersites, Sinon, and Neoptolemus as violations of the supposed rule (*Miscellaneous Letters*, pp. 109–10). A manuscript poem gives the "common-sense" reaction to Rymer's argument:

Of all your Censures on poor Shakespear laid  
That of his Ensign's being a Villain made  
Is wondrous hard—Villains too much abound,  
And are in all Professions to be found.  
Tradesman, Physitian, Lawyer, Poet, Preist,  
Will each of them afford us one at least.  
Tis strange the Souldier should be exempt alone,  
Only for wearing such commission:  
If every Souldier's Scarfe encompasses,  
Nothing but Worth the World will mend apace.

("A Manuscript Poem to Thomas Rymer," *PQ*, 30 [1951], 219.)

Warburton, as one might expect, attempts an elaborate answer:

This hath the appearance of sense, being founded on that rule of *Nature* and *Aristotle*, that each character should have manners convenient to the age, sex, and condition. . . . According to this rule it is confessed, that a soldier should be brave, generous, and a man of honour. This is to be his dramatic character. But either *one* or *more* of any order may be brought in. If only one, then the character of the order takes its denomination from the manners of that *one*. Had therefore the only soldier in this play been *Iago*, the rule had been transgressed, and *Rymer's* censure well founded. For then this *eternal villain* must have given the character of the soldiery; which had been unjust and unnatural. But if a *number* of the same order be represented, then the character of the order is taken from the manners of the majority; and this, according to nature and common sense. Now in this play there are many of the order of the soldiery, and all, excepting *Iago*, represented as open, generous, and brave. (*Shakespeare*, 8, 405.)

PAGE 135:16. Suetonius, *Tiberius*, LXI, 3. Rymer considerably expands "Agamemonem probris laccessisset."

PAGE 135:23. There is no such passage in the Cinthio story.

PAGE 136:30. Gildon points out the obvious, that the more noise Roderigo and Iago make, the better for their plan of alarming Brabantio into violent passion (*Miscellaneous Letters*, preface). This merely evades Rymer's point that a *magnifico* must not be alarmed. Voltaire later noted that La Place had reduced the whole dialogue here to "Je dis, monsieur, que vous êtes trahi, et que le Maure est actuellement possesseur des charmes de votre fille." He comments, "Je ne dis pas que le traducteur ait mal fait d'épargner à nos yeux la lecture de ce morceau." However, he gives a literal translation (*Œuvres*, Paris, 1877-85, 7, 436); twelve years later, in his letter to the French Academy, he gave another (*ibid.*, 30, 353-4).

PAGE 137:7-8. Gildon apologizes for these lines as a concession Shakespeare had to make to his audience (*Miscellaneous Letters*, p. 89).

PAGE 137:10. *say* is misprinted *sad*, as it is in the 1655 quarto, which Rymer's text generally follows.

PAGE 137:26. Aristophanes, *Knights*.

PAGE 137:33. Rabelais, I, xxxix. The translation is Rymer's own.

PAGE 138:9. D'Aubignac (II, ii) admits that decorum will vary if a character is incognito.

PAGE 138:13. *As double as the Duke*: Warburton, regarding this as the sort of barbarism to which Rymer objects, answers: "But it is an elegant *Grecism*. *As double*, signifies as large, as extensive; for thus the *Greeks* use *δωλοῦς*" (*Shakespeare*, 8, 283; also Theobald, *Shakespeare*, 7, 380).

PAGE 139:33. Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 912 ff.

PAGE 141:5. *Rehearsal*, III, ii.

PAGE 141:15. Rabelais, III, xxi. The translation of the poem is almost identical with Urquhart's, but Urquhart's translation of bk. III was first published by Motteux in November 1693. Rymer may have seen the work in manuscript, or Motteux, who revised Urquhart's work before publishing it, may have taken over Rymer's translation (R. N. Cunningham, *Motteux*, Oxford, 1932, p. 74). One other point faintly connects Rymer with the Urquhart-Motteux Rabelais: British Museum MS. Stowe 748, f. 216, has a short poem, "Rabelais to the Reader," apparently in an 18th-century hand, ascribed to Rymer in a second hand, while still a third hand has added, "Author of the Foedera." The poem, beginning, "Elsewhere I taught physicians doubtful skill," is prefixed to the fourth book of Motteux's translation (omitted from editions after 1737). The verses could equally well be by Rymer or by Motteux.

PAGE 142:13. See above, p. 129.

PAGE 142:17. Rymer had earlier called the unities the mechanical part of tragedy (p. 18), and he regularly distinguishes between mere absurdity and violations of morality (e.g. p. 161).

PAGE 144:6. *Enwheel thee round* is the correct reading. Rymer's *the* is probably a misprint, but Rymer, regarding the whole speech as frenzy, undoubtedly missed the image here.

PAGE 145:8. *Apochryphal Matter*: See above, p. 113.

PAGE 149:23. The quarrel scene between Amintor and Melantius had also suggested the *commedia dell' arte* to Rymer (p. 73:8 and note).

PAGE 149:26. Rabelais, II, xix.

PAGE 152:26. *Gorboduc*, IV, ii, 248–58, not very accurately quoted. For Rymer's opinion of the play, see above, p. 130.

PAGE 156:27. *Deputing Cassio in his Government*: Theobald's comment on the time scheme here shows how close he was to being Rymer's follower: "Had Mr. Rymer intended, or known how, to make a serious and sensible Critic on this Play, methinks here is a fair Open given for Enquiry and Animadversion. *Othello* is, as it were, but just arrived. . . . and *Othello* is at once remanded home, without any Imputation suggested on his Conduct" (*Shakespeare*, 7, 461).

PAGE 157:20. One need hardly insist that *Othello* was not cashiered and that Brabantio was not involved in his transfer; Rymer, as always, interprets as unfavorably as possible. However, Theobald in the note just quoted is not too far from Rymer's position.

PAGE 158:12. Seneca, *Hippolytus*, 607: "Curae leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent." Rymer had earlier quoted the line correctly, p. 35.

PAGE 158:30. Spingarn suggests, "Rymer probably wrote *salsa picante* (i.e. piquant sauce); in any case, the disjunctive *o* (i.e. or) seems preferable to the interjection *O*" (*Essays*, 2, 349).

PAGE 158:32. Ovid, *Tristia*, II, 409.

PAGE 160:6. Catullus, V, 4.

PAGE 160:15. *sub tam lentis maxillis*: Suetonius, *Tiberius*, XXI, 2—Augustus' remark on Tiberius' probable treatment of his subjects.

PAGE 160:24. Rymer's discussion of the handkerchief has probably taxed our patience too far already, and early attempts to deal with the argument give little comfort. Theobald, for example, stated that Shakespeare's fancy exerted its highest creative power in making the handkerchief derive from an enchantress and thus have great magic powers (*Shakespeare*, 7, 447). I know of only one full and direct answer to Rymer on this point, George Gordon's essay, "Othello, or the Tragedy of the Handkerchief." Gordon's argument, in brief, is that domestic

tragedies (of which *Othello* is one) are so constructed as to turn on trivial incidents:

I am afraid that our old critic was blind—as well as a little vulgar. The truth is that in such a play as *Othello* nothing is silly; nothing is too slight or too trifling to become a weapon of deviltry. It is this, no doubt, that makes Domestic Tragedy so sinister. The scene is small. The instruments are of necessity so fatally tiny, so deceptively innocent—tittle-tattle, a nod, a whisper, a glove, a handkerchief. (*Shakespearean Comedy*, Oxford, 1944, p. 105.)

PAGE 160:27. Quintilian, VI, i, 36.

PAGE 161:13. *Rehearsal*, IV, i.

PAGE 161:15. This speech actually precedes the last one Rymer has quoted.

PAGE 161:21. *Flamstead*: John Flamsteed (1646–1719), first astronomer royal.

PAGE 161:22. Rymer is probably thinking of Bayes' eclipsing the sun and moon (*Rehearsal*, V). Since Rymer's views on elevated diction had changed so greatly, it is hardly fair to quote from Act IV of his own *Edgar*:

Start not the Rocks, nor aged Mountains reel?—  
Nor yet my Might do's the cleft Center feel?  
The Poles, the Stars on heaps, th' affrighted Moon,  
On All—on All—my hot Revenge is thrown.

Theobald answered Rymer by pointing out that this violation of natural phenomena is based on the crucifixion (*Shakespeare*, 7, 484–5).

PAGE 163:12. John a Noakes and John (or Tom) Styles were fictitious characters used by lawyers in actions of ejectment.

PAGE 163:17. See above, p. 23:22 and note.

PAGE 164:11. See above, p. 129.

PAGE 165. Despite Langbaine's lack of enthusiasm, *Julius Caesar* was one of Shakespeare's most popular plays at the time, as may be judged not only from the frequent references to it but also by the more material evidence of six quartos before 1692 (Bartlett and Pollard, *A Census of Shakespeare's Plays in Quarto*, New Haven, 1939, pp. 38–45). Downes (p. 8) gives the following cast:

Julius Cæsar,	Mr. Bell.
Cassius,	Major Mohun.
Brutus,	Mr. Hart.
Anthony,	Mr. Kynaston.

Calphurnia,	Mrs. Marshal.
Portia,	Mrs. Corbet.

After the union of the companies, Betterton and Smith (later Verbruggen) took the parts of Brutus and Cassius respectively, but Hart and Mohun were regarded as unexcelled (Summers, in Downes, pp. 114–15). It is impossible to determine what text Rymer used—presumably one of the late quartos. If the evidence given by Miss Bartlett (“Quarto Editions of *Julius Caesar*,” *The Library*, ser. III, 4 [1913], 122–32) is correct, all these quartos date after 1684, and Rymer’s earlier quotation (p. 59) must have come from a folio; his statement (p. 17) that he provided himself with a copy cannot then be taken literally.

PAGE 165:20. *Spelman*: Sir Henry Spelman (1564–1641), antiquarian, author of a *History of Sacrilege* (not printed until 1698) and other works on church questions and heresy.

PAGE 166:20. Rymer is not the only critic who has missed the ritual quality of these lines. Pope, followed by Warburton, assigned them to Casca, though “In all the editions this speech is ascribed to *Brutus*, than which nothing is more inconsistent with his mild and philosophical character” (*Shakespeare*, London, 1723, 5, 258). Theobald took angry issue with Pope, but he explained the lines by saying that Brutus had been excited by the murder (*Shakespeare*, 6, 164). The 1719 edition of *Julius Caesar*, whose playhouse revisions were (probably wrongly) ascribed to Dryden and Davenant, contented itself with omitting “up to the elbows” for decorum’s sake. The French translation by La Place in *Le Théâtre Anglois* (London, 1746), 3, 184, assigned the lines to Casca without comment. Voltaire in his translation also gave the lines to Casca, with the note: “C’est ici qu’on voit principalement l’esprit différent des nations. Cette horrible barbarie de Casca ne serait jamais tombée dans l’idée d’un auteur français; nous ne voulons point qu’on ensanglante le théâtre, si ce n’est dans les occasions extraordinaires, dans lesquelles on sauve tant qu’on peut cette atrocité dégoûtante” (*Œuvres*, Paris, 1877–85, 7, 482–3). In *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar* by John Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, the lines are given to Cassius; Brutus answers, “The Deed is done, what need we triumph in it?” and in the stage direction “They all stoop down to *Cæsar’s* body except Brutus” (*Works*, London, 1723, 1, 294). It has been suggested that Pope’s assignment of the speech in his edition of Shakespeare was influenced by Buckingham’s play, which he had prepared for the printer; see Malcolm Goldstein, “Pope, Sheffield, and Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*,” *MLN*, 71 (1956), 10. That the scene is not ritual, and that its brutality—especially with Brutus participating—

was meant to excite and shock the spectators, has been argued by Leo Kirschbaum, "Shakespeare's Stage Blood," *PMLA*, 64 (1949), 520-4. PAGE 166:25. Villon, "Ballade de l'Appel de Villon," sometimes called "Question au Clerc du Guichet," ll. 9-12. Pasquier indignantly denied this rumor (*Recherches de la France*, Paris, 1643, VI, i, 436-8); he quoted the first two lines from Villon and cited but did not quote the Dante passage (*Purgatorio*, XX, 49-52). PAGE 166:27. Pope in his edition relegated "Now it is Rome indeed, and room enough" to a footnote as a quibble unworthy of Shakespeare. PAGE 167:35. Theobald answers Rymer at some length:

I cannot help having the utmost contempt for this poor ill-judged Sneer. It shews the Height of good Manners and Politeness in the Conspirators, while *Brutus* and *Cassius* whisper, to start any occasional Topick, and talk *extempore*; rather than seem to listen to, or be desirous of overhearing, what *Cassius* draws *Brutus* aside for. And, if I am not mistaken, there is a Piece of Art shewn in this whisper, which our *Caviller* either did not, or would not, see into. The Audience are already apprized of the Subject on which the Faction meet: and therefore this whisper is an Artifice, to prevent the Preliminaries, of what they knew beforehand, being formally repeated. (*Shakespeare*, 6, 146.)

Among the French translators, La Place omitted the whole conversation, and Voltaire gave it with the footnote, "On a traduit cette dissertation, parce qu'il faut tout traduire" (*Œuvres*, Paris, 1877-85, 7, 463).

PAGE 168:14-21. *Rehearsal*, II, iv: "Usher: The grand question is, whether they heard us whisper." Rymer's last quotation first appeared in the augmented third edition of the play.

PAGE 168:30. Dryden, in the preface to *Troilus and Cressida*, had praised this scene: "For the passions in his scene between Brutus and Cassius are extremely natural, the thoughts are such as arise from the matter, the expression of 'em not viciously figurative" (*Essays*, 1, 226). Rymer's criticism here is similar to that of the quarrel between Melantius and Amintor (pp. 72-4) and the scene between Iago and Othello (pp. 148-9). Many years later an unfortunate critic was snubbed for following Rymer:

This scene between Brutus and Cassius was the admiration of the age in which the author lived, and has maintained its important character to this hour. But, such was the delicacy of a Frenchman, Abbé le Blanc, who resided a few years in this country and wrote



some letters on our customs and manners, that, in his account of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, he acquaints his friend that the two great Roman generals upbraided each other in the language of porters; Garrick assured me that when he was in France, he refused an invitation to meet this author, on account of his profanation of Shakespeare. (Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, London, 1785, 2, 251-2.)

PAGE 169:5. Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, II, vii, 1-3. Macrobius merely speaks of Caesar; the reference is to Julius, not Augustus (Suetonius, *Julius*, XXXIX, 2). Rymer strains the point, that Laberius by appearing on the stage forfeited his knightly rank—which Caesar immediately restored.

PAGE 170:14. These military units are in Act V of *The Rehearsal*.

PAGE 170:17. Heywood, *Apology for Actors* (London, Shakespeare Society, 1841), p. 58. Heywood dates the story "some twelve years ago" (c. 1600), but since Rymer probably used the undated edition of c. 1638, he supplies his own date. "Sampson and the Philistines" is Rymer's addition, and he follows Heywood in writing Perin for Penryn. Marvin Rosenberg has pointed out to me that the story is taken over by R. Polwhele, *The History of Cornwall* (London, 1816), 4, 74; Polwhele erroneously gives Rymer's *Foedera* as his source.

PAGE 170:25. See above, p. 18:8 and note.

PAGE 170:32. *Vir bonus dicendique peritus*: Not Cicero but Cato, quoted in Quintilian, XII, i, 1. Cicero, *De oratore*, II, xx, 85, does not stress the point as Aristotle and Quintilian do.

PAGE 170:35. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I, ii, 4; II, i, 5.

PAGE 171:5. *Catiline*, unlike the other plays Rymer criticizes, was not an outstanding success on the Restoration stage. It was not revived until 1668 and was occasionally presented thereafter. Langbaine stated, however, "This play is still in Vogue on the Stage, and always presented with success" (*An Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, p. 288). Pepys, who saw it December 19, 1668, was not impressed: "A play of much good sense and words to read, but that do appear the worst upon the stage, I mean, the least diverting, that ever I saw any, though most fine in clothes; and a fine scene of the Senate, and of a fight, that ever I saw in my life. But the play is only to be read, and therefore home, with no pleasure at all, but only in sitting next to Betty Hall." The cast on that occasion presumably included Hart as Catiline, Mohun as Cethegus, and Mrs. Corey as Sempronius; the other parts are not assigned in the 1669 quarto (Noyes, *Ben Jonson on the English Stage*, Cambridge, Mass., 1935, pp.

301–11). Dryden, in *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, had condemned the play for mixing tragedy and comedy (*Essays*, I, 60), and in the *Defence of the Epilogue* pointed out bad grammar in the play (*ibid.*, pp. 167–9). Davies suggests that Hart revived the play perhaps at the instigation of Buckingham and Dorset (*Dramatic Miscellanies*, London, 1785, 2, 88).

PAGE 171:12. Rymer's discussion of this ghost may owe something to Corneille's *examen* to *Andromède*: "Mais comment se feroit l'apparition d'Éole dans ce cabinet? et comment les vents l'en pourroient-ils enlever, à moins que de la faire passer par la cheminée, comme nos sorciers?" (*Œuvres*, 5, 307).

PAGE 171:30. Corneille, *Œuvres*, I, 137–8.

PAGE 172:4. See above, p. 84 and notes.

PAGE 172:3. *Brentford Army: The Rehearsal* again.

PAGE 172:14. Horace, *Ars poetica*, 133–4, 132. In the second line quoted accepted texts read *non* for Rymer's *nec*.

PAGE 172:32. Rymer applies his just enunciated principles of translation to Horace, "Quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus" (*Ars poetica*, 359).

PAGE 173:5. Horace, *Epistolae*, II, i, 186.

PAGE 173:26. This most common charge against Aristophanes was admitted by D'Aubignac, I, vii.

PAGE 173:28. Plutarch, *Alcibiades*, XXII and *passim*.

PAGE 174:24. Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 607–23.



## TEXTUAL NOTES

ONLY THE Rapin and Rochester prefaces went through more than one edition, and in these the later variants do not appear to go beyond printers' corruptions and emendations. The text is based on the first edition in each case. The aim has been to present a precise rather than a graceful text, so changes from the first editions have been kept to a minimum, even to the point of keeping probable misspellings when these are not unduly disturbing. Spelling and italics have been left unchanged. Rymer's paragraphing is haphazard, and his punctuation heavy and careless, but these cannot be altered without modifying his informal organization and loose syntax. We must be content with his apology, "Nor I know could you . . . be at a loss for the sense, where you found not a period truly pointed" (p. 76).

The two long works were carelessly printed: there are some forty misprints in *Tragedies of the Last Age* (of which a dozen were corrected in the errata) and more than fifty in *A Short View*. None causes real difficulty, and the primary list below contains all of even marginal interest. Since it is not likely that Rymer's works will be often reprinted, however, it seems desirable to have a complete record; therefore a supplementary list of minor misprints and variants records all other departures from the collated texts, including dropped, turned, or transposed letters. The use of italics in punctuation has been silently normalized. As far as practical, quotations have been left as Rymer gave them. Particularly, the "Provencial" texts have not been altered even to remove turned letters; few readers—perhaps not Rymer himself—would have recognized the errors. Greek accents and breathings have been silently normalized. Rymer's footnote references have been left unchanged even where wrong; correct references are given in the notes. The reference marks, rather eccentrically placed, are with one exception left unchanged.

Numerous copies of each work have been used—about twenty each for *Tragedies of the Last Age*, *Edgar*, and *A Short View*, and five or more of the first editions of the other two works. Save for the resetting of one page of *Tragedies of the Last Age* (see below, note to p. 40:19) there are no substantial differences among copies. I have noted a few corrections made during printing, but in view of the glaring errors allowed to remain it is hard to attach much importance to these.

## THE PREFACE TO RAPIN

The text is based on 1674 (A), collated with 1694 (B). I have substituted footnotes for the marginal notes and have supplied reference marks. The square brackets in the text are Rymer's. Proof was read against the copy of A in the Yale University Library and the copy of B in the Houghton Library of Harvard.

PAGE 6:13. Mortals—A]Morals—B.

PAGE 9:22. The lineation in A is . . . *Ly-/rico./co*. Yet . . . ; B omits the redundant *co* and begins a new paragraph with *Yet*.

PAGE 10:9. (fragment and—A]fragment (and—B.

PAGE 10:36. δὲ]τε—A, B.

PAGE 11:1. τεθνεώτων]τεθνεότων—A, B.

PAGE 13:13. *Sopia*]Sopra—A, B.

PAGE 13:35. *plaines*]plains—A, B.

PAGE 14:32. *fait*]fuit—A, B.

*The Tragedies of the Last Age*

The text is that of 1678 (A) of which 1692 is merely a reissue. I have omitted the analytical table of contents—really an index. Line references to the plays are inserted in angular brackets; the line numbering is that of *The Works of Beaumont and Fletcher, 1* (London, 1904), except for *Rollo* where I have supplied my own line count. The corrections made in the errata by Rymer are incorporated into the text and are noted below. Proof has been read against the three copies in the Yale University Library.

PAGE 20:29. *fates*]faces—A, corrected in errata.

PAGE 21:17. *Torrismondo*]Torrismodo—A.

PAGE 21: note. *imperfezione*]imperferione—A.

PAGE 22:1 and 3. *Episode*]Episods—A, corrected in errata.

PAGE 23:5. The reference mark stands before *picture* in A.

PAGE 31:5. ἐρινύων]ερινόων—A.

PAGE 31:6. στενάζον]στενάζων—A.

PAGE 31:8. προνοία]προνοεία—A.

PAGE 35:22. his Complements]the first Complement—A, corrected in errata.

PAGE 40:1. *mettle*]matter—A, corrected in errata.

PAGE 40:19–33. A few copies (with both 1678 and 1692 title pages) set this passage as two prose paragraphs, the second beginning “But ill is our condition.” The only textual differences are the initial capital letters made necessary by the lineation of the version here given. The

passage, together with the title "A King and No King," takes up all of p. 56 (sig. E4<sup>v</sup>); other pages in the gathering are not affected. A comparison with p. 104, the beginning of "The Maid's Tragedy" and the only page in the volume of comparable design, suggests that the two-paragraph version was the original and the one printed here the resetting, but one cannot be absolutely certain.

PAGE 51:8. Hippolytus;]Hippolytus,—A.

PAGE 52:10–11. (*a sweet evil*)]*a sweet evil*—A.

PAGE 52:23. *knew*]know—A, corrected in errata.

PAGE 58:36. *a propos*]a *a propos*—A, corrected in errata.

PAGE 63:2. *Evadne's*]Evadners—A, corrected in errata.

PAGE 63:29. ladies]bodies—A, corrected in errata.

PAGE 65:4. crime. If]crime, if—A.

PAGE 65:14. *si*]nisi—A, corrected in errata.

PAGE 65:19. kill'd,]kill'd.—A.

PAGE 66:7. The errata list gives *μῶπος* as do most copies of the text, save that the latter have the usual printing contraction of the -os ending. A few copies read *μῶποος* (also with the -os contracted). Rymer and the printer apparently made the same correction independently.

PAGE 66:7. δεσπότης]δεσπότης—A.

PAGE 67:16. *insieme*]infieme—A.

PAGE 68:20. *with*]for—A, changed in errata; see explanatory note.

PAGE 69: note. *processerit*]processeret—A, miscorrected to *processiret* in some copies.

PAGE 76:14. *knew*]know—A.

#### THE ADVERTISEMENT TO *Edgar*

The text is that of 1678, of which 1691 and 1693 are merely reissues. I have noted only one misprint, and that appears in all copies.

PAGE 77:13. much]must—1678.

#### THE PREFACE TO ROCHESTER

The text is that of 1691 (A), collated with 1696 (B), 1710 (C), and 1714 (D); an intervening edition, 1705, was not available for collation. The system of typography of A has been reversed, roman for italic and italic for roman, except that the numerals have been left in roman type. Proof has been read against the copies in the Yale University Library.

PAGE 78:6. Matters—A]Matter—B-D.

PAGE 78:12. exquisitely—A]excellently—B-D.

PAGE 79:9. on—A, B]omitted C, D.



PAGE 79:15. have—A-C]omitted D.

PAGE 79:17. that—A]the—B-D.

PAGE 79:24. ou—C, D]au—A, B.

PAGE 79:25. jusqu'à—C, D]insqu'à—A, B.

PAGE 79:34. a—C, D]u—A, B.

PAGE 79:36. le—A]omitted B-D.

PAGE 81:4. St.—A]omitted B-D.

PAGE 81:6. Whatsoever—A, B]Wheresoever—C, D.

PAGE 81:11. Imagination—A]Imitation—B-D.

PAGE 81:11. Flights would—A]Flight should—B-D.

### *A Short View of Tragedy*

The text is that of the only edition, 1693 (A). The initial table of contents has been omitted since it is reprinted exactly at the head of each chapter. Also omitted is the appendix, which reprints from De Voisin the French original of the document translated on pp. 113–15. Line references to *Othello* and *Julius Caesar* are inserted in angular brackets; the line numbering is that of *The Works of William Shakespeare* (Cambridge, 1864). Proof has been read against the copy in the Yale University Library and the three copies in the Houghton Library at Harvard.

PAGE 89:14. Temples—the Yale copy alone reads Tepmles.

PAGE 91:19, 23, and 27. Chorus—the Yale copy alone has this set in italics.

PAGE 95:14. Habergeons]Hageons—A.

PAGE 98:8. poetæ]poeta—A.

PAGE 101:26–31. The reference mark before *St.* is repeated after *God*; there is a reference mark after *years* identical with that after *Book*. Rymer apparently intended at least one more footnote.

PAGE 103:12. la]ta—A.

PAGE 104:note to l. 23. δ]θ—A, an easy mistake with the older forms of printed Greek letters.

PAGE 106:14. πνεῖν]πεῖν—A.

PAGE 110:21. as well]at well—A.

PAGE 118:26. Monotony]Monotomy—A; but cf. *Monotomie* in Rymer's translation of Rapin quoted in the explanatory note to this line.

PAGE 122:14. takes a]takesa—A; the *a* is a broken letter at the end of the line, and it should perhaps be omitted.

PAGE 123: heading. VI]VII—A.

PAGE 130:8. proportion. In]proportion in—A.

PAGE 131: heading. VII]V—A.

PAGE 137:10. *say*]sad—A. See explanatory note.

PAGE 139:18. *drugs*]drags—A.

PAGE 143:13. *he*]be—A.

PAGE 134:35. *a while*]while—A.

PAGE 151:30. *her*;]her,—A.

PAGE 173:30. And by]And—A.

PAGE 174:8. *pur*er]urer—A.

PAGE 175:note. Rymer's page reference would be to p. 102 of this edition.

#### MINOR MISPRINTS AND VARIANTS

P. 2:15, make (B). P. 6:30, "Heaven (A and B). P. 8:12, *Ulysse's* (A). P. 10:30, right (A). P. 10:36, *ὁδῖς* (A). P. 14:30, *ponrpre* (A). P. 14:32, *toute* (A and B). P. 19:26, aud. P. 20:28, ccnsid-er'd. P. 21:22, perfection. Page 21:note, *gravi e* for *gravi*. P. 22:28, Histoty. Page 28:18, *Salamin*. P. 29:33, *continne*. P. 32:22, praic-tis'd. P. 37:28 (second occurrence) and 29, *Allon*. P. 37:31, Carac-ters. P. 44:11, *Gobria's*. P. 44:2, fauls. P. 44:31, On. P. 46:24, *iustinct*. P. 62:note, *καίμοι*. P. 79:23, *s'e'levant* (A). P. 79:24, *marchant* (B). P. 79:34, A and B drop period after *partage*. P. 80:11, *Ah* (C). P. 88:9, *Richelien*. P. 89:10, *penses*. P. 90:37, Francc. P. 91:22, *Armade*. P. 93:1, *Aschylus*. P. 94:28, *Togatæs*. P. 95:18, *Tencer*. P. 96:16, loo'd. P. 98:31, *Animum*. P. 100:15, *Isralites*. P. 100:18, *Worstip*. P. 100:26, declarcs. P. 101:36, Christion. P. 101:36, *n* for *in*. P. 102:8, *Trageaies*. P. 103:3, *Sorbone*. P. 106:25, *seelera*. P. 109:26, Epithete. P. 112:18, *Aciosto*. P. 112:21, tregedies. P. 126:23, Poetry?. P. 130:11, witten. P. 149:13, *Harlequim*. P. 155:5, *C pe*. P. 159:26, period dropped after *Stage*. P. 161:33, whtiher. P. 170:15, *Brigate*. P. 171:16, *Catliine's*. P. 172:3, *Breentford*. P. 172:19, *morabe is*. P. 172:21, period after *Manners*. P. 174:24, Spectato s. P. 175:1, coun-foundedly. P. 175:13, together?. P. 175:24, con'd.



## The Canon of Rymer's Works

NO BIBLIOGRAPHY OF RYMER has been complete or accurate, and some sort of check list is necessary for any sketch of his career. In the following list I have given full citation of titles except for mottoes; for present purposes full bibliographical description is unnecessary. I have gracelessly listed those errors of my predecessors which have caused confusion, but not thereby denying the great debt I owe them. Wherever possible I have noted entries in the *Term Catalogues* (T.C.) and in the Stationers' Register (S.R.), as well as notices in contemporary periodicals. Also I have cited item numbers in the following bibliographies:

Donald F. Wing, *Short-Title Catalogue . . . 1641-1700*, New York, 1945-51.

Arthur E. Case, *A Bibliography of English Poetical Miscellanies 1521-1750*, Oxford, 1935.

Hugh Macdonald, *John Dryden; a Bibliography*, Oxford, 1939.

Hugh Macdonald and Mary Hargreaves, *Thomas Hobbes, a Bibliography*, London, 1945.

Des Maizeaux's life of Rymer (really a bibliography) in B.M. MS. 4223 is cited merely as Des Maizeaux. Place of publication is London unless otherwise noted. I have seen all items except the third letter to the Bishop of Carlisle (item 18) and the variant titles listed under item 6d.

1. *Epithalamia Cantabrigiensia in nuptias auspicatissimas serenissimi Regis Caroli II, Britanniarum Monarchæ, et illustrissimæ Principis Catherinæ, potentissimi Regis Lusitaniæ sororis unicæ*. Cambridge, John Field, 1662. Wing C335, Case 136. Contains a Latin poem of 38 lines, signed "Rymer, C. Sid.," on leaf M.

2a. *Reflections on Aristotle's treatise of poesie, containing the necessary, rational, and universal rules for epick, dramattick, and the other sorts of poetry. With reflections on the works of the ancient and modern poets, and their faults noted. By R. Rapin. Licensed June 26. 1674. Roger L'Estrange*. T.N. for H. Herringman, 1674. Wing R270; Macdonald 181a; S.R. August 1, 1674 (2, 487); T.C. Michaelmas 1674 (1, 188); *London Gazette*, November 26-30, 1674; Clavell, *Catalogue of Books*, Michaelmas 1674. Authorship is established not only by Rymer's name on subsequent editions but by his acknowledgment in *Tragedies of the Last Age*.

2b. *Monsieur Rapin's reflections on Aristotle's treatise of poesie. Containing . . . noted. Made English by Mr. Rymer; by whom is added some reflections on English poets.* T. Warren for H. Herringman, 1694. Wing R271; Macdonald 181b; *London Gazette*, January 29–February 1, 1693/4; *Gentleman's Journal*, December 1693, p. 419. This is a new edition.

2c. Title follows 2b except for punctuation. London, 1706. This constitutes pp. 107–244 of vol. 2 of *The whole critical works of Monsieur Rapin . . . newly translated into English by several hands.* 1706. T.C. Hillary 1705/6 (3, 494).

2d. Title follows 2c except for punctuation, and pagination is identical. The general title reads, *The whole . . . English, by Basil Kennet, D.D. late president of Corpus Christi College, Oxon; and others. The second edition.* 1716. A new edition.

2e. Titles and pagination follow 2d except for punctuation and *some-time president for late president and third edition for second edition.* 1731. A new edition.

3a. *The tragedies of the last age consider'd and examin'd by the practice of the ancients, and by the common sense of all ages. In a letter to Fleetwood Shephard, Esq; by Thomas Rymer, of Grays-Inn, Esquire.* Richard Tonson, 1678. Wing R2430; Macdonald 188a; T.C. Michaelmas (November 26) 1677 (1, 294); *London Gazette*, January 14–17, 1677/8. According to the notice on the flyleaf the book was licensed July 17, 1677. Publication was shortly before August 20, 1677 (see above, p. 193)

3b. *The tragedies of the last age, . . . by Mr. Rymer servant to their majesties. Part I. The second edition.* Richard Baldwin, 1692. Wing R2431; Macdonald 188b. For notices see item 15. A reissue of 3a with cancel title page. Wing lists as item R2432 a 1694 edition in Dr. Williams Library, London; this is based on a misprint in that library's printed catalogues of 1801 and 1841.

4a. *Edgar, or the English monarch; an heroick tragedy. By Thomas Rymer of Grays-Inn Esq; Licensed Septemb. 13. 1677. Roger L'Estrange.* Richard Tonson, 1678. Wing R2423; T.C. Michaelmas 1677 (1, 291). The song which opens the third act was included (in part) in H. Playford's *Choice ayres and songs . . . the third book*, 1681, p. 16, with a musical setting by James Hart.

4b. *The English monarch: an heroick tragedy. Written by Tho. Rymer, Esq;* James Knapton, 1691. Wing R2424; T.C. Michaelmas 1690 (2, 336). A reissue of 4a with cancel title page. The British

Museum copy lacks leaves A3–4 which contain the dedication to the king, the advertisement, and the list of characters. From this it is inferred in the *DNB* that the dedication was purposely removed. But there is a perfect copy at Harvard.

4c. *Edgar or the English monarch; an heroick tragedy*. By Mr. Thomas Rymer, servant to their majesties. The second edition. James Knapton, 1693. Wing 2424a; T.C. Trinity 1693 (2, 468). Another re-issue of 4a.

5. *Ovid's epistles, translated by several hands*. Jacob Tonson, 1680. Wing O659; Case 165; Macdonald 11; *London Gazette*, February 5–7, 1679/80. Contains "Penelope to Ulysses by Mr. Rymer," pp. 169–76. Other editions 1681, 1683 (twice), 1688, etc.

6a. *A general draught and prospect of government in Europe, and civil policy. Shewing the antiquity, power, decay of parliaments. With other historical and political observations relating thereunto. In a letter*. Tho. Benskin, 1681. Wing R2426; T.C. Hillary 1680/1 (1, 429). Rymer's name first appears on the 1714 edition, though he is mentioned as author in the notice in the *Term Catalogues* for the 1689 issue. Few bibliographies have identified this title with its later variants. Watt's *Bibliographia Britannica* gives the title in the form of 6c and lists editions as 1684, 1704, and 1714; this information is repeated in the *DNB* and in several later bibliographies. Hardy (p. xxii) lists editions as 1684, 1689, and 1714. The dates 1684 and 1704 are almost certainly errors.

6b. *A view of government . . . policy: also of the antiquity, power and decay . . . thereunto*. By T.R. Esq; R. Baldwin, 1689. Wing R2433; T.C. Hillary 1689/90 (2, 303). A reissue of 6a with cancel title page. The running head, of course, reflects the earlier title.

6c. *Of the antiquity, power & decay of parliaments. Being a general view of government, and civil policy, in Europe: with . . . observations, relating thereunto*. By Tho. Rymer, Esquire, late historiographer-royal. J. Roberts, 1714. A new edition.

6d. *Of the power of parliaments. With political observations relating thereunto*. By Thomas Rymer, Esquire. Late historiographer-royal. The third edition. J. Roberts, 1714. A reissue of 6c with cancel title page. The only copy I know of is in the Yale University Library. W. T. Morgan, *A Bibliography of British History (1700–1715)*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1934–37, also lists (item Q557) the following: "Of the Power of Parliaments with political observations relating thereunto: being a general view of government, and civil policy in Europe. Reprinted on occasion of Capt. Steele being expelled the House



of Commons, 73 pp, 12°, L (S. by J. Roberts), 1714." Publisher and pagination suggest that this is identical with 6c, d, e, and f except for title page; I have not located a copy.

6e. Identical with 6c except for title page reading 1715.

6f. Identical with 6d except for title page reading 1715.

6g. James Ralph's *Of the use and abuse of parliaments*, 1744, reprints this essay on pp. 1–78 of the first volume, under the title "A general view of government in Europe," and gives the following attribution: "As an Act of Justice to the Memory of a great Man, it is necessary to acquaint the Reader, That he stands indebted for the first of the following Discourses, to the celebrated *Algernon Sydney*, Esq." The essay is Rymer's, and the simplest explanation is that Ralph came upon the 1681 edition (item 6a) which alone has no hint of authorship and rashly ascribed it to Sidney. From here it was reprinted in the 1772 edition of Sidney's *Works*, though the editor, J. Robertson, was certain that the work was not Sidney's. The *DNB* (under Ralph) is incorrect in stating that Ralph's 1744 work had the name "A. Sidney" on its title page, and also (under Sidney) that it was reprinted in Thomas Hollis' edition of Sidney's works in 1763. Samuel Klinger, *The Goths in England* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), p. 192, was the first to note the identity of this supposed Sidney essay and Rymer's; Klinger, unaware of the complex bibliography of Rymer's essay and misled by the old view that Rymer was a fanatical royalist, felt that the essay must be Sidney's since Rymer could not have written it. John B. Shipley first pointed out this Sidney-Rymer problem to me and has generously helped in its solution.

7. *Plutarch's lives. Translated from the Greek by several hands. To which is prefixt the life of Plutarch.* Jacob Tonson, 1683–86. Vol. 3, 1684. Wing P2638; Macdonald 131a. Notices for vol. 3: *London Gazette*, May 19–22, 1684, June 4–8, 1685; *Observator*, May 26, July 2, 1684. Contains "The life of Nicias, English'd from the Greek, by Thomas Rymer, Esq;" 3, 437–99. Other editions 1693, 1700, 1703, etc.

8. *Miscellany poems. Containing a new translation of Virgills Eclogues, Ovid's love elegies, odes of Horace, and other authors; with several original poems. By the most eminent hands.* Jacob Tonson, 1684. Wing D2314; Case 172; Macdonald 42a; S.R. February 4, 1683–84 (3, 223); *Observator*, February 2, 1683/4, May 16, 1685. Contains translation by Rymer of Ovid, *Amores*, III, 6, on pp. 150–3. Hardy incorrectly called this a translation from *Tristia* and gave the date 1692; the error was repeated in the *DNB* and *Encyclopedia Britannica*. The implication in the *DNB* that these verses were first published separately

probably rests on a misreading of Hardy. Rymer's translation was reprinted in the 1692 edition of *Miscellany Poems* but was omitted in the third (1702) and subsequent editions.

9. *Historia ecclesiastica carmine elegiaco concinnata. Authore Thoma Hobbio Malmesburiensi. Opus posthumum.* Augustæ Trinobantum [i.e. London], 1688. Wing H2237; Macdonald and Hargreaves 101. The Latin preface is ascribed to Rymer by Des Maizeaux (B.M. MS. Additional 4223) and by Aubrey (*Brief Lives*, ed. Clark, Oxford, 1898, p. 394). A translation of the volume and its preface was published as *A true ecclesiastical history, from Moses, to the time of Martin Luther, in verse . . .* E. Curll, 1722. Macdonald and Hargreaves 102.

10. *Poems to the memory of that incomparable poet Edmond Waller Esquire. By several hands.* Joseph Knight and Francis Saunders, 1688. Wing P2724; Case 185; T.C. Hillary 1687/8 (2, 217). A poem signed by Rymer is on pp. 4–9; pp. 10, 26–7 contain two poems signed only "T.R.," almost certainly Rymer's. The poems in this volume are reprinted in *The first part of miscellany poems . . . the fourth edition*, 1716 (Case 172–1–e), pp. 223–5, 234, 267, and in J. Nichols' *A select collection of poems*, 1780, pp. 120–5.

11. *An epistle to Mr Dryden.* A single half-sheet poem beginning "Dryden, thy Wit has catterwauld too long," printed in double column on one side of the page. Wing E3166. Of the two copies in the Folger Library, the one on heavier paper (Macdonald 256a) is execrably printed; the second copy (Macdonald 256b) apparently represents the same setting of type after correction, and adds at the end, "Exeter, Nov 5 1688," a reference to King William's landing rather than to place and date of publication. From 1689 on the poem is reprinted in a number of the collections eventually entitled *Poems on affairs of state* (Case 189–1, 191–2, 211); Case 189–1 reprints the uncorrected text, while the other reprintings are closer to the "Exeter" text. The poem is first clearly labeled as Rymer's in the advertisement to *Poems on affairs of state*, vol. 4, in 1707 (Case 211–4–a). Rymer's name had appeared on the title page of *Poems on affairs of state, the second part*, 1697 (Case 191–d), which contained the poem, though Rymer's contribution was not specifically identified. No other poem by Rymer is quite like this one, but the rough verse and colloquial language suggest his style.

12. *A poem on the Prince of Orange his expedition and success in England. Written by Mr. Rymer.* Awnsham Churchill, 1688. Wing R2428.

13. *A poem on the arrival of Queen Mary. February the 12th. 1689. Written by Mr. Rymer.* Awnsham Churchill, 1689. Wing R2427.

14. *Poems, &c. on several occasions: with Valentinian, a tragedy. Written by the right honourable John late Earl of Rochester.* Jacob Tonson, 1691. Wing R1756 (miscalled the third edition). Rymer's name does not appear on the preface until 1714, but there is no reason to doubt the ascription. Other editions 1696, 1705, 1710, 1714, 1732.

15. *A short view of tragedy; it's original, excellency, and corruption. With some reflections on Shakespear, and other practitioners for the stage. By Mr. Rymer, servant to their Majesties.* Richard Baldwin, 1693. Wing R2429; Macdonald 271; T.C. Hillary 1692/3 (2, 442); *Athenian Mercury*, January 10, 1692/3. These two notices are together with notices for the 1692 issue of *The tragedies of the last age* (item 3b); the two volumes were issued simultaneously, intended to be bound together (*Gentleman's Journal*, December 1692, p. 15). According to the October 1692 issue of the *Gentleman's Journal* (p. 17) the book was not yet published, but it was ready in time to be reviewed in the December issues of the *Gentleman's Journal* and of the *Compleat Library*. These journals were planned to appear early in the month but often fell behind: the January 1692/3 *Gentleman's Journal* was still being written in March (p. 1), and the December 1692 *Compleat Library* was advertised in the *Athenian Mercury* for January 14, 1692/3. Rymer's book may have appeared by the end of December 1692, but there is little justification for changing the title-page date to 1692 as many bibliographies do.

16. *Letters to the Right Reverend the Ld. Bishop of Carlisle. Occasioned by some passages in his late book of the Scotch library. Wherein Robert the Third is beyond all dispute freed from the imputation of bastardy. A particular account is given of King David's ransom, and of the hostages for the payment of the same. With several original papers relating to the Scotch affairs: and a grant of the liberties of Scotland. Letter I.* James Knapton, 1702. T.C. Michaelmas 1702 (3, 320). Though this and the two following letters are not signed, there is no doubt that they are Rymer's. There is a personal reference in this letter, Rymer gave copies of all three to Leibnitz and to Ralph Thoresby (Hardy, p. xli), and they are listed by Des Maizeaux.

17. *To the Right Reverend the Ld. Bishop of Carlisle. Containing an historical deduction of the alliances between France and Scotland. Whereby the pretended old league with Charlemagne, is disproved: and the true old league is produced and asserted. To which is added, a notable piece of church-history from Her Majesty's archives; never before publish'd. Letter II.* Tho. Hodges, n.d.

18. *To the right reverend the Ld. Bishop of Carlisle; containing a*

*third vindication of Edward the Third: Letter III.* 1706. The title is taken from Halkett and Laing, *Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous Authors*, Edinburgh, 1926–34. The same title was given by Des Maizeaux. Hardy was unable to locate a copy of the book, nor have I been able to.

19. *Fædera, conventiones, literæ, et cujuscunque generis acta publica, inter reges Angliæ, et alios quosvis imperatores, reges, pontifices, principes, vel communitates, ab ineunte sæculo duodecimo, viz. ab anno 1101, ad nostra usque tempora, habita aut tractata; ex autographis, infra secretiores archivorum regionum thesaurarias, per multa sæcula reconditis, fideliter exscripta. In lucem missa de mandato reginæ. Accurante Thoma Rymer, ejusdem serenissimæ reginæ historiographo.* A. & J. Churchill, 1704–35. There are twenty volumes, of which Rymer edited the first fifteen, and assembled material toward the sixteenth. The work was completed by Robert Sanderson. First volume entered S.R. November 29, 1704 (3, 497). Other editions: 1727–35; the Hague, 1737–45; 1816–69 (incomplete).

20. *Curious amusements: fitted for the entertainment of the ingenious of both sexes; writ in imitation of the Count de Roche Foucault, and render'd into English from the 15th. edition printed at Paris. By a gentleman of Pembroke-hall in Cambridge. To which is added, some translations from Greek, Latin, and Italian poets; with other verses and songs on several occasions, not before printed. By T. Rymer, Esq; late historiographer-royal.* D. Browne, W. Mears, and J. Browne, 1714. The dedication is signed "M.B."—initials I have been unable to identify in spite of the clue of Pembroke Hall. Rymer's poems constitute the last part of the volume, pp. 133–92, and are introduced by a separate title page, *Some . . . by Thomas Rymer . . . Royal*. There is no doubt of the genuineness of this work; some poems are unexpectedly graceful, but others are in Rymer's colloquial, lumbering style, and one poem had already appeared as a song in the third act of *Edgar*. The verses, "To Dorolissa, On her being like my Lord Dorset," had been printed in Tate's *Poems by several hands*, London, 1685 (Case 181), and also exists in MS. 14,090 (f. 226<sup>v</sup>), Nationalbibliothek, Vienna (R. Brotanek in *Festschrift der Nationalbibliothek in Wien*, Vienna, 1926, p. 155, and Brice Harris, *Charles Sackville*, Urbana, 1940, p. 163). I have found no other record of Rymer poems in manuscript. To one of these, "That He Loves Women of All Sorts and Sizes, by Mr. R—," Tate appends the note, "The foregoing Elegy, having been publish'd imperfect, is here Printed from the best Copy" (p. 35); I have not discovered the imperfect publication. Two other poems had been printed in the Tate

collection noted above. Some of the poems have been reprinted in A. H. Bullen, *Musa Proterva*, 1889, pp. 125–7; Norman Ault, *Seventeenth-Century Lyrics*, 1928, pp. 394–5; William Kerr, *Restoration Verse*, 1930, pp. 169–71.

In addition the following items have been ascribed to Rymer. They vary considerably in importance. *Cicero's Prince* throws considerable light on its author's political views; *A Defense of Dramatick Poetry* is a passable work of literary criticism. These, however, can with complete assurance be removed from the canon. The preface to Bulstrode Whitlocke's work and the Latin life of Hobbes are doubtful. I believe both of them to be Rymer's; in each case some perfectly simple bit of evidence has probably eluded me. The only item here that is really controversial is *An Essay Concerning Critical and Curious Learning*, which has been generally ascribed to Rymer on the basis of the "TR Esq." on the title page. There is really no warrant for expanding these initials into Thomas Rymer, but since no one has really investigated and since bibliographies have copied each other in this matter, I am faced with the difficult problem of proving a negative. For my part, I am certain that the work cannot be Rymer's. However, the importance of this work in the history of criticism is slight, though it is an interesting commentary on the battle of the books.

A. *Cicero's prince. The reasons and counsels for settlement and good government of a kingdom, collected out of Cicero's works. By T.R. Esq;* S. Mearne, 1668. Wing C4320; T.C. Hillary 1668/9 (1, 5); *London Gazette*, February 4–8, 1668/9. The work is dedicated to the Duke of Monmouth. Hardy (p. xix) first ascribed this translation of Bellenden to Rymer and has been generally followed. The work is by Monmouth's tutor, Thomas Ross, who signed his full name to *The second Punique war between Hannibal and the Romanes*, 1681 (Wing S3783, but with the author's name not noted), and who signed as T.R. Esq. to *An essay upon the third Punique war*, 1671 (Wing R81); this last work was also dedicated to Monmouth. See "The Literary Career of Thomas Ross," *PQ*, 21 (1942), 443–4.

B. *Thomæ Hobbes Angli Malmesburiensis philosophi vita. . . .* Carolopoli [i.e. London], Wm. Cooke, 1681. Wing H2268; Macdonald and Hargreaves 93 (see also items 94, 94a, 95, and headnote to item 91). This work contains (after commendatory verses) a preface signed "R.B." (Richard Blackbourne) and then three Latin lives of Hobbes. The first is headed *Tho. Hobbes Malmesburiensis vita*, the second *Vitæ Hobbianaë auctarium*, and the third *Thomæ Hobbes Malmesburiensis*



*vita carmine expressa*. Of these the last, in verse, is clearly by Hobbes himself. The first, the *Vita*, is extremely brief, while the second, the *Vitae auctarium*, is substantial. The shares of Richard Blackbourne, John Aubrey, and Thomas Rymer in these two lives are by no means clear. The primary evidence is not ample and may be quoted in full. Blackbourne in the preface states; "Cum itaque pararia opera J.A. viri optimi, in manus meas incidisset libellus de vita et moribus Hobii, a docto quodam, summo ejus amico conscriptus oratione sane gravi, prudenti ac modesta, mei officii esse duxi, publici ipsum juris facere." The Latin is trying enough to demand translation: "And so, when through the agency of that noble gentleman J[ohn] A[ubrey] there had fallen into my hands a booklet about the life and character of Hobbes written in a style especially dignified, reasonable, and unassuming, by a certain scholar who was a very good friend of his, I considered it to be within the province of my duty to make it available to the public." Blackbourne is clearly stating that the work is not his, and his praise would be unbecoming were he more than its transmitter. Nor, according to the statement, can Aubrey be the author, though his agency (*pararia opera*) may, as usual with him, have involved active gathering of materials. The work then was by *docto quodam, summo ejus amico*; pronouns leave it uncertain whether he was a very good friend of Aubrey or of Hobbes. The author of the *Vitae auctarium* gives a list of Hobbes's friends concluding with John Aubrey, "qui princeps mihi scribendi ansam praebeuit, et materiam humaniter suppeditavit [who was the principal person that gave occasion to my writing this Life, & who supplied me with Materials for it]" (Hobbes, *Opera Philosophica*, ed., Molesworth, London, 1839, I, lxxv; p. 187 of the 1681 ed.; the translation is that given in the life of Aubrey quoted below). Aubrey himself in speaking of a draft of Hobbes's autobiography mentions Hobbes's "Life in Latin by Dr. Richard Blackburn" (*Brief Lives*, ed. Clark, I, 395); this need mean no more than that Blackbourne edited the volume. But a manuscript life of Aubrey (B.M. MS. Additional 4221, fol. 27) states: "He [Aubrey] wrote the Life of his Friend Mr. Hobbes in English, which was communicated in M.S. to Rich<sup>d</sup>. Blackburn, M.D. who translated it into Latin, & publish'd it with the Life in Latin Verse written by Mr. Hobbes himself in 1681 in 8<sup>vo</sup>. He acknowledges likewise his obligations to our Author for the best part of his *Auctarium Vitae Hobbiana*. This statement contradicts Blackbourne's own preface and is probably based on only partial information. Des Maizaeux ascribes this material to Rymer, citing it merely as "*Vie de Thomas Hobbes* publiée en 1681," leaving it doubtful whether he is referring to the brief *Vita* or the longer *Vitae*



*auctarium*. The most definite statement occurs in the article on Hobbes by John Campbell in the *Biographia Britannica* in 1757. He argues that both prose lives are in the same style, a style different from that of Blackbourne's preface, and continues

. . . we have heard the short prose life was written by Thomas Rymer, Esq; the famous critic, in the life-time, and with the participation of Mr Hobbes; and our conjecture is, that he wrote the supplement after his decease, at the request and from the materials furnished him by Mr John Aubrey; but being desirous that this might remain a secret, he suffered that gentleman to put them into the hands of Dr Blackbourn, who published them; and this we take to be a probable at least, if not a certain account of this matter. (4, 2615.)

This seems an attempt to rationalize the evidence already before us and distinguishes clearly between rumor and hypothesis; also it distinguishes clearly between the problem of the *Vita* and that of the *Vitae auctarium*. Since both the life of Aubrey quoted above and Des Maizeaux's manuscript bibliography of Rymer were part of Thomas Birch's collection they may have been available to Campbell, but his statement suggests he had more information than the mere entry in Des Maizeaux. Des Maizeaux's authority I have been unable to find, but his statement is positive and he makes no other errors of commission. Hardy argued that the life must be by Blackbourne since Blackbourne wrote the preface, "which Rymer would scarcely have permitted had he written the Life" (p. xxii). But this is contrary to Blackbourne's own statement. There is no reason why anyone should have brought in Rymer's name in connection with these lives unless some tradition had ascribed them to him. His exact share, and his collaboration with Aubrey, cannot now be determined.

C. *Memorials of the English affairs: or, an historical account of what passed from the beginning of the reign of King Charles the first, to King Charles the second his happy restauration. Containing the publick transactions, civil and military. Together with the private consultations and secrets of the cabinet.* Nathaniel Ponder, 1682. Wing W1986; T.C. Hillary 1681/2 (1, 471). The work is by Bulstrode Whitelocke and was edited by Arthur Annesley, Earl of Anglesea. The preface, "The publisher to the reader," has been variously ascribed to both Anglesea and Rymer. John Oldmixon assumed that the preface was by Anglesea (*Clarendon and Whitlock Compar'd*, London, 1727, p. 167). Thomas Birch in his article on Whitelocke seems to speak of the writer of the

preface as someone different from Anglesea (*A General Dictionary*, London, 1734–41, 10, 145). The preface is definitely ascribed to Rymer in Watt's *Bibliotheca Britannica* in 1824. I regret that I have not found the source of Watt's information. The ascription is highly plausible on stylistic grounds; in view of Anglesea's editorship of the volume the preface would not be ascribed to anyone else without reason. There is no good ground for denying Rymer's authorship. Other editions 1709, 1732, 1853.

D. *The slaughter of the innocents by Herod. Written in Italian by the famous poet the Cavalier Marino. In four books. Newly Englished.* Adam Clark for Samuel Mearne, 1675. Wing M602. The dedication to the Duchess of York is signed "T.R." On the basis of these initials library catalogues sometimes attribute the work to Rymer, though I know of no published work that does so. The verse is certainly bad, but it is not Rymer's kind of badness, and nothing in the dedication suggests his prose style. The case is not worth arguing.

E. *A defence of dramattick poetry: being a review of Mr. Collier's view of the immorality and prophaneness of the stage.* Eliz. Whitlock, 1698. Wing F905. This was followed in the same year by *A farther defence of dramattick poetry: being the second part of the review . . . stage. Done by the same hand.* Wing F906. These works have been ascribed to Rymer or to Edward Filmer. P. J. Dobell, however, had a copy of both volumes bound together, containing a dedication signed "E. SETTLE" (*Oldenburgh House Bulletin*, no. 5, item 31); the Henry E. Huntington Library has a copy with apparently the same dedication but merely signed "E.S." In the Huntington copy the four leaves of the dedication bear the signatures A1–4 but are actually the inner leaves of the first gathering. The suspicion that they were added later is confirmed by the dedication, which refers to both parts of the book and says that the first volume had been issued undedicated. For a similar problem in Settle dedication, see Settle, *The Preface to Ibrahim* (Oxford, Luttrell Society, 1947), p. v. At all events, this work is by Elkanah Settle.

F. *An essay, concerning critical and curious learning: in which are contained some short reflections on the controversie betwixt Sir William Temple and Mr. Wotton; and that betwixt Dr. Bentley and Mr. Boyl.* By T. R. Esq; R. Cumberland, 1698. Wing R2425; A. T. Bartholomew, *Richard Bentley, a Bibliography* (Cambridge, 1908), item 99; T.C. Trinity 1698 (3, 81). This was followed by *A vindication of an essay concerning . . . Boyl. In answer to an Oxford pamphlet. By the author of that essay.* E. Whitlock, 1698. Wing, R2434; Bartholomew, item 101; T.C. Michaelmas 1698 (3, 96). These pamphlets were first as-

cribed to Rymer by Hearne in 1709: "I think this T.R. is Mr. Thomas Rymer" (*Remarks and Collections of Thomas Hearne*, Oxford, 1885-1921, 2, 256-7). Hearne apparently was guessing from the initials, but he was close enough to Rymer's interests that his guess must be allowed some weight. The attribution to Rymer has been generally accepted but without much investigation. Thomas Birch in his article on Bentley for *A General Dictionary* (London, 1734-41), 10, 450, assumed Rymer's authorship; an expert on Rymer, G. B. Dutton, argued that praise of Aristotle and mention of Shakespeare's monstrous irregularities fitted Rymer exactly ("Thomas Rymer and Aristotelian Formalism," unpublished dissertation, Harvard, 1910, pp. 96-8); recently George Sherburn quoted a passage from it as an example of Rymer's critical position (*A Literary History of England*, ed. A. C. Baugh, New York, 1948, p. 720). But the pamphlets themselves hardly support the argument. In the first of them the author as *tertium quid* adjudicates in the battle of the books: the first half is a discussion of how far critical and curious inquiries are conducive to the advancement of solid and useful learning, the last half a review of the books of Bentley, Wotton, and Boyle in the Phalaris controversy. The remarks are, without exception, commonplace. The sentences are long and relaxed, frequently with balanced clauses—far different from Rymer's vigorous, aphoristic, colloquially abusive style. The second pamphlet in its incessant petty quibbling shows the real triviality of the author's mind. It is hard to believe that Rymer, deeply engaged in *Foedera*, would interrupt his work for this sort of pamphleteering when he had no particular point to make; it is impossible to believe that he would have done it so fecklessly. The brief discussion of literary criticism (pp. 26-32 of the first pamphlet) is not unfairly characterized in the answering pamphlet: "This is just as much and no more than has been said an hundred times in Dedications and Prefaces to Plays." There is the usual mention of Aristotle and of the rules as based on reason, a defense of the rules against untrammelled genius, and passing mention of Shakespeare's monstrous irregularities and shining beauties. Rymer would scarcely disagree with any of this; indeed, one or two statements may owe something to him. But could Rymer have written even six pages on literary criticism without going beyond drab statements of commonplaces? I have no suggestion for the identity of this T.R. Esquire, but much stronger evidence is needed before one can regard him as Rymer. Certainly the writer of the Oxford pamphlet had no notion that his opponent was a man of any stature whatever.





## INDEX

For citations to the text of Rymer (pp. 1-175) duplicate citations to the notes on these passages are not usually given. No attempt has been made to deal with Rymer's critical opinions under the entry of Rymer, Thomas, but insofar as practicable they are indexed by subject.

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